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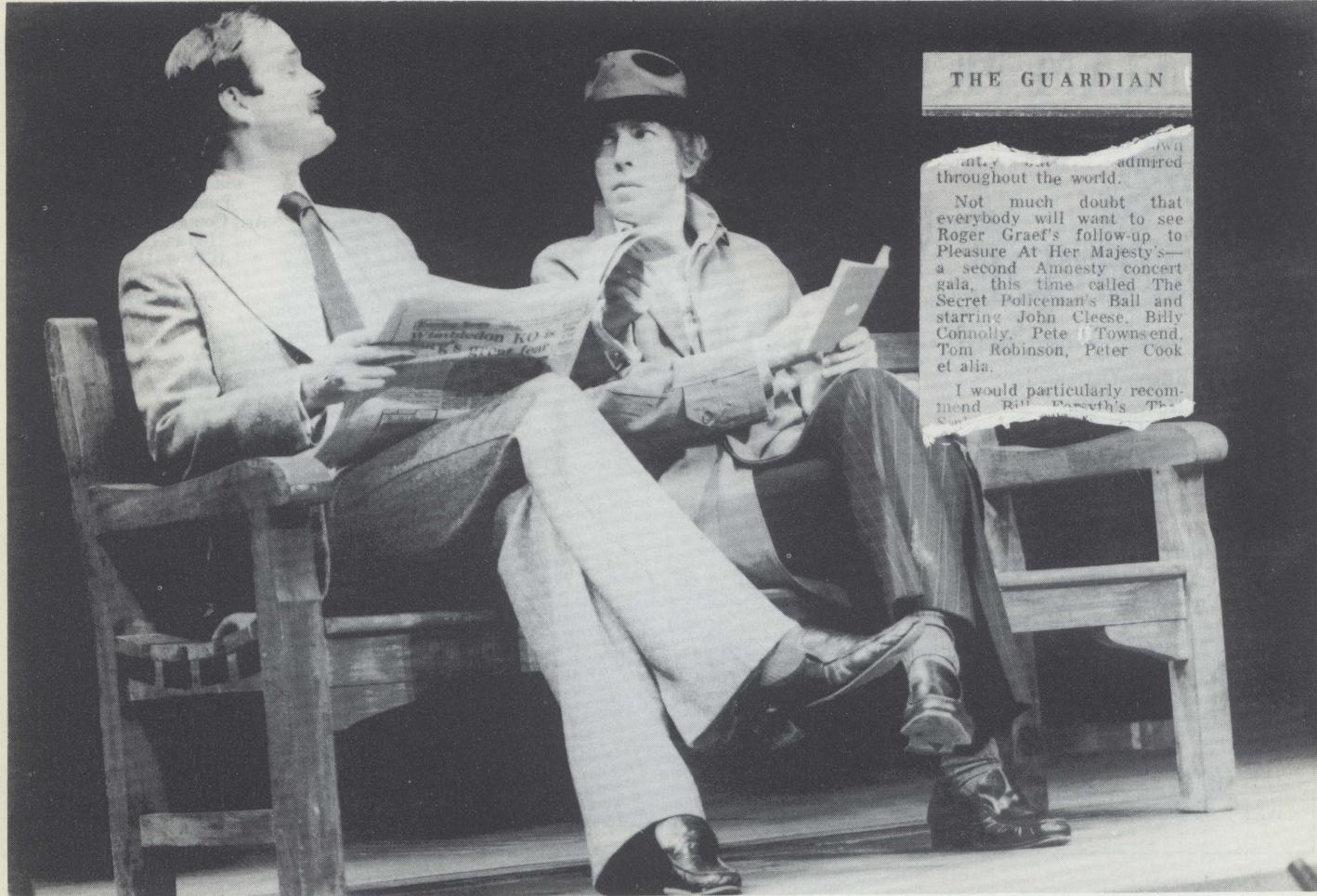
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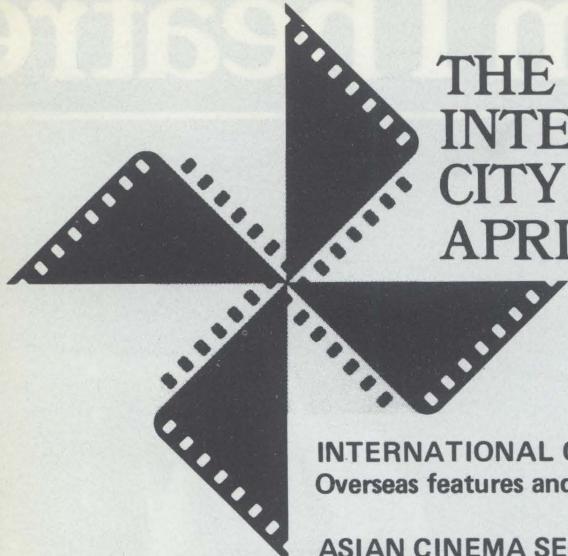
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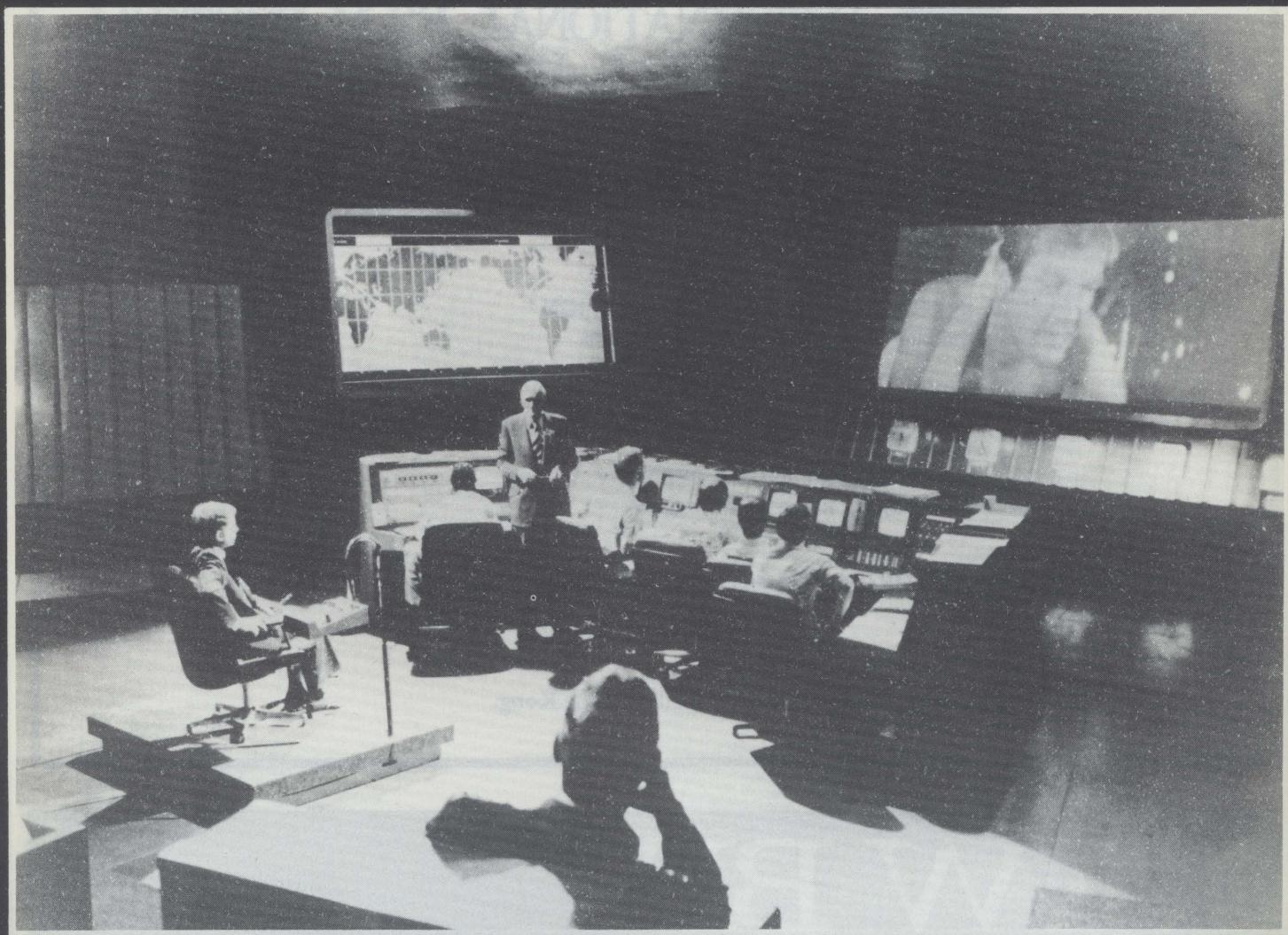
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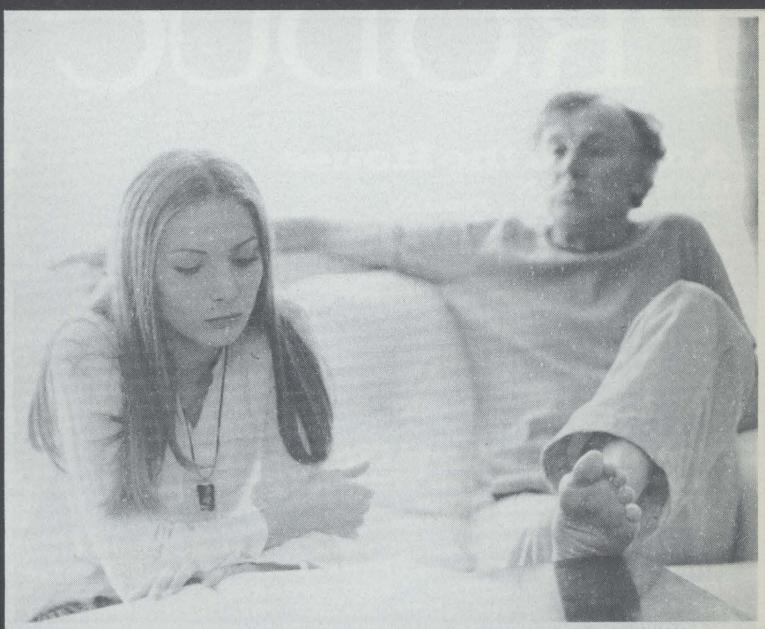
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SIGHT AND SOUND

WINTER 1979/80

Volume 49 No. 1

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On the cover:
'Apocalypse Now'

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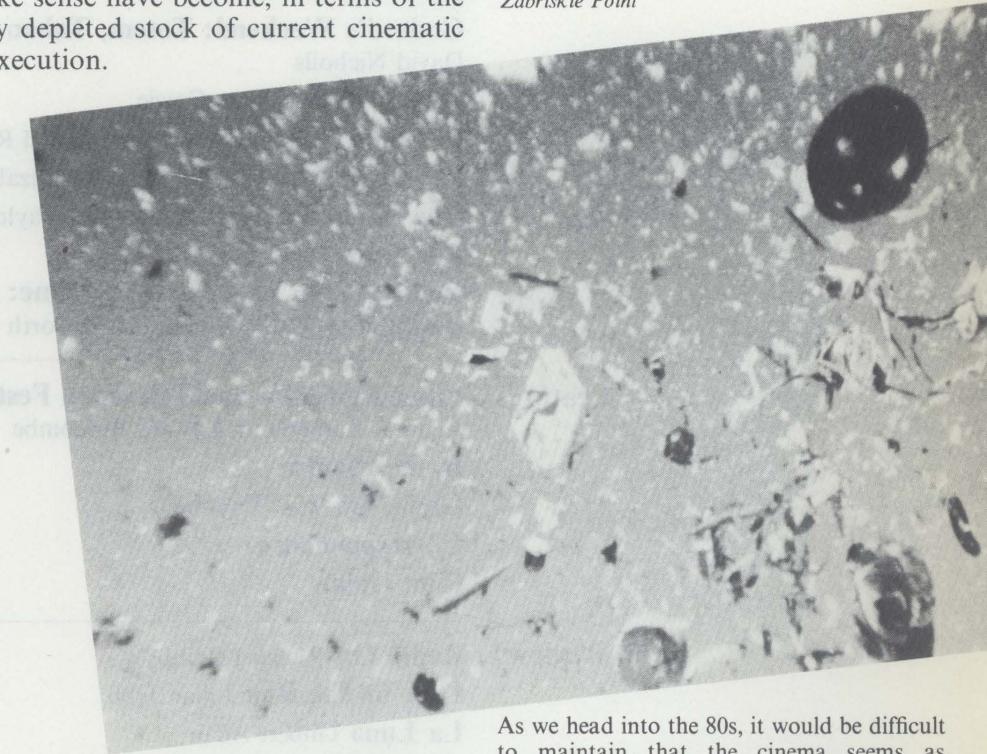
ONWARD but NOT UPWARD

In the Autumn 1979 issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, David Thomson disinterred and quoted from an article I wrote for this magazine a staggering nineteen years ago. The context of the original piece was a lively if ultimately perhaps slightly factitious set-to between *SIGHT AND SOUND* and *Movie* on rival approaches to criticism. ('Form' and 'content' are blazons under which no one should choose to fight, and a skirmish waged on those terms too easily becomes a rattle of false positions.) Rather sententiously, perhaps, I suggested that 'the critical duty is to examine the cinema in terms of its ideas, to submit these to the test of comment and discussion.' 'Ideas' strikes me now as a cannily chosen word, allowing for an evident variety of interpretation. But it is disconcerting, across the chasm of the 60s and 70s, to be reminded that comments which still seem to make sense have become, in terms of the secondhand, dilapidated and generally depleted stock of current cinematic 'ideas', appreciably more difficult of execution.

The 60s was a remarkable decade for the cinema; most notably for the European cinema. At the time this might not have been so readily apparent; looking back, this in many ways shoddy, dangerous and discredited decade was also the period of 'never had it so good' in more assorted senses than Harold Macmillan reckoned with. The liberating New Wave insistence that 'anyone can now make a film' was never of course true; and 'anyone' still had to go to a great deal of trouble to get a film on to a screen. But the exhilarating stimulus of sheer energy and sense of opportunity that ushered in the 60s lasted at least through the decade. It is disconcertingly easy, I found, to compile a list of up to fifty film-makers, mainly but by no means exclusively European, who now seem to belong essentially to that period, who either reached their peak during the 60s, or have failed to sustain the promise they showed then, or have simply found it difficult or discouraging to keep working in the cinema with any kind of continuity.

Anderson, Antonioni, Demy, Forman, Godard, Jancsó, Lester, Losey, Olmi, Resnais, Rocha, Warhol: this is no more than a random sampling of names. In almost every case, 'ideas' are paramount, whatever pressure one cares to put on the word. In a number of cases, the film-makers met what still seems to me the most severe and ultimately relevant challenge: their films shifted the balance of point of view; changed, if only slightly and only for the moment, the way we saw things. The 60s produced a whole range of film images that imposed themselves very powerfully, from the figures in Antonioni's north Italian landscapes to the corridors of *Alphaville*; from Kubrick's monoliths in space to Resnais' chateau lost in time.

The 60s was no time for nostalgia. Neither film-makers nor filmgoers felt the need to look back over their shoulders, remembering how it had been done before, or to play games



consciously with the genres. Entertainment fashions, as flashy as James Bond or as nervous as *Easy Rider*, were distinctively of their day. The decade was never remotely comfortable, too heavily overshadowed by the Kennedy assassinations, by Vietnam and Czechoslovakia; but the unease as well as the energy got through to the screen, in anything from the blood and bounce of *Bonnie and Clyde* to *La Chinoise*, in which Godard foreshadowed 1968.

Film education got a boost during the 60s, in particular with a striking increase in the number of American students taking film courses. The increase would probably have been of similar proportions in Britain, if the courses had existed. And it seemed at the time entirely fitting that the events of May 1968 should announce themselves by way of the halting of the Cannes Film Festival and the

Penelope Houston

demands for 'free' film shows for workers. I remember thinking at the time that if the agitators of '68 had been more serious, more concerned with real power and influence, they would have concentrated their attentions on the television studios. A film festival was never more than a symbol; but in 1968 it contrived to look a powerful one.

*The explosive end of the 60s:
'Zabriskie Point'*

As we head into the 80s, it would be difficult to maintain that the cinema seems as significant, as relevant or as enlivening as it did ten years ago. Half a dozen times in the past year, I have had more or less identical conversations with various friends who also earn their living writing and thinking about films, and who agree that they see fewer films than they used to and approach them with less sense of expectation. Rather too often, the weekly press show list does tend to suggest the contents of an overturned dustbin. It is not merely that we are none of us getting any younger: some of the people concerned have been very young indeed. Nor, I think, is this just pointless moping. In fact most reviewers, far from being cynically jaded, show an almost pathetic eagerness to find some cause for enthusiasm. The Australian cinema, for instance, really isn't all it's cracked up to be; but reviewers have fallen over themselves in praising pictures of

perceptible but limited virtues offering unfamiliar landscapes and accents.

What happened to movies in the 1970s? In one sense, of course, they can be said to have done very well, beginning finally to win back some of the long lost audience. Everyone can recite the litany of films that did the trick: *Jaws* and *Star Wars* and *Saturday Night Fever* and so on. With the inexorable progress of inflation, each new smash hit, almost without trying, inevitably takes more money than its predecessor; box-office records which used to stand for years are now toppled every few months. But the really popular films of the last few years have been triumphs of marketing and packaging for audiences prepared to take John Travolta and C3PO to their gullible hearts. As David Thomson also noted in the Autumn *SIGHT AND SOUND*: 'The young audience knows now that it is meant to identify with the movie, not the people or situations in it. More and more shows are light-and-music trips for kids, a kind of environmental disco illusion.' This audience is not assumed to be taking its mind into the cinema.



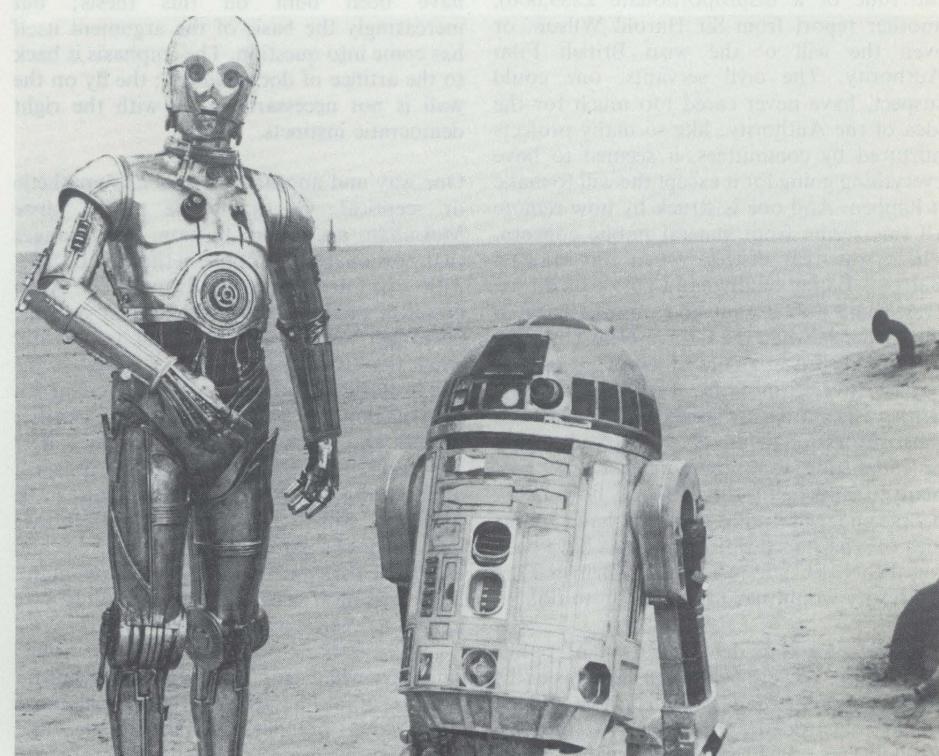
Images for the 70s. Above: 'A Clockwork Orange'; below: 'Star Wars'

says the Keynote survey, 'that the revival of the cinema is purely temporary. Unfortunately, it is not possible to disagree with this view... There are indications that cinema-going, like a visit to the theatre, is becoming a special occasion; the future may lie in the leisure complex of cinemas, bars, restaurants, discotheques and so on, in which case the capital requirement will be beyond all but the majors in the leisure industry.'

It would be interesting to know whether the revival—still only modest, since the 1978 attendance figures don't even begin to compare with those for so recent a year as 1974—has made itself felt to the same effect as the national average in the more specialised cinemas. Or have they done worse or better? Unfortunately, there is no statistical breakdown which goes that far. An impression, for what it is worth, would be that specialised cinemas gain on their more

'popular' films but not otherwise. Although this is speculation, backed by a few shreds of evidence, I would guess that a new work from an unfashionable or unfamiliar area (Eastern Europe; the Far East, except for the fast fading kung fu films) actually stands rather less chance now than it did ten years ago. The gallant band of independent distributors, faced with the increasing cost of everything involved in importing prints, are also up against the problem of a fragmented audience. In the 60s, anyone interested in the cinema at a certain level would have felt that he had to see the latest film by Godard or Antonioni or Bergman. Not everyone feels the same need now to keep up with the Fassbinders.

Film book publication, in Britain and the U.S. and France, would seem to have passed its heyday—several publishers have made rather costly mistakes, and the flood of titles



In Britain, the audience went on steadily dropping through the first half of the 70s. By 1976 it was down to a mere 106.7 million a year, or as near two million a week as makes no difference. (At its distant peak, of course, the British cinema audience was thirty million a week.) In 1977 it staged a tiny recovery, and in 1978, the last year for which figures are available, it leapt to 127.4 million. Hardly coincidentally, advertising expenditure on film promotion, which had moved up gradually from £2.21m in 1972 to £4.84m in 1977, also jumped in 1978, to £7.30 m. The advertising, not just of the film but of the promotional bits and pieces associated with it, is the real big business.

Keynote Publications, from whose useful recent survey I have taken these figures, adds that the British audience is overwhelmingly young—56 per cent in the 15-24 age group and 77 per cent under 35. Britain, they further point out, now has the lowest number of cinema seats per head of population of any European country. It has been suggested,

of a few years ago has been reduced. This is probably all to the good; we can certainly do without the shelf-fodder of picture books on the careers of every feature player from Jeanette MacDonald to Lassie, or popular surveys perpetuating the old factual errors. The market for specialised publications, provided that their prices can be kept within bounds, seems still to be modestly increasing. But it is also significant that the fastest growing film magazine circulation in the 70s has been that of the AFI's *American Film*, which offers a fairly easy sort of reading and is not too concerned with cinema beyond American shores.

The Hollywood majors have not only held on in this decade; if anything, they look stronger than ever. And one indirect consequence of this demonstration of power, one gathers from conversations with those involved in film teaching in the States, is that the European cinema of ideas looks less attractive than it once did to the American film students, and the Hollywood cinema of money a lot more so. 'It's very hard to get through to them,' one distinguished American critic told me a year or so ago. 'All they really want to talk about is *Star Wars* and *Jaws*.' American students have seen that it is possible to become Francis Coppola or George Lucas: they want the key to those glittering prizes. (British film students, more humbly, seem to want themselves to teach film; perhaps accepting that they won't get much chance to make it.) A commercial cinema of nostalgia, repetition and gamesmanship, in which films are numbered and dated to establish the vintages (*Airport 80*, *Omen II* and so on) encourages the dream that success depends on fast talk and the luck of the draw.

In Britain, apart from the enterprises of the Lords Grade and Delfont, the cinema has seemed to exist monotonously in a state of waiting for something to turn up—a new slice of state subsidy, a new interpretation of Eady (one that will not allow the short that happened to be shown with *Grease*, for instance, to walk away with Eady money to the tune of a disproportionate £239,000), another report from Sir Harold Wilson, or even the will o' the wisp British Film Authority. The civil servants, one could suspect, have never cared too much for the idea of the Authority; like so many projects nurtured by committees, it seemed to have everything going for it except the will to make it happen. And one is struck by how remote all this seems from general public concern. There was real distress when Sir Michael Balcon's Ealing finally had to close its doors, even some public guilt and outrage back in the early 50s when the Crown Film Unit was wound up. But in an era of supposed greater public interest in films, the plight of the British cinema hardly seems to reach beyond those professionally involved with it. It would be interesting to know, for instance, how many members of the BFI, or how many people engaged in film teaching, have a clear idea of what the various proposals have been for the NFFC, or just what a British Film Authority would have been set up to do.

The most striking demonstration of public unconcern, however, has perhaps been the reaction—or seeming lack of reaction—to the recent ITV strike. For more than two months, the most popular, and many would argue

most influential, medium of news and information and entertainment disappears from sight; and is, as far as public reaction may be guessed at, far less seriously missed than anyone might have thought possible. If Sir Harold Wilson had still been in Downing Street, there would no doubt have been flurries of publicity and urgent action; but Mrs. Thatcher, in seeing the strike as of no special significance and allowing it to take its course, would also seem accurately to have gauged the public mood. Alan Sapper and his relatively well-heeled ACTT could hardly count on ready sympathy. But during the strike there was a marked absence of the familiar manufactured indignation—press stories about toddlers pining for their lost programmes, old age pensioners bereft of *Coronation Street*, and so on. It may or may not be true, as reported, that at any given moment a million sets across the land were likely to be switched on as usual, tuned to the ITV notice announcing the absence of programmes. A monotonous medium (in the sense, that is, of depending on sameness in series and serials and programme formats to hold public attention) is watched simply because it is there; and perhaps still watched, uncaring, when it isn't there. But discussions on the power of television and its influence, particularly in politics, do look a little different after this experience.

Another dream of the 60s was the significance of 'communication', envisaged not only as a means but almost as an end in itself. I remember a long conversation with one of the pioneers in video, during which his eyes lit up at the prospect of a new era for small-town democracy. A meeting on some local issue would be taking place in the town hall, it would be filmed on video, rushed to the local TV station, and within minutes people down the road would be getting it on their screens. The suggestion that they might perhaps be better encouraged to go themselves to the town hall was brushed aside. 'Communication' itself was a key part of the democratic process. A pile of films and television programmes, of undoubted value, have been built on this thesis; but increasingly the basis of the argument itself has come into question. The emphasis is back to the artifice of documentary; the fly on the wall is not necessarily a fly with the right democratic instincts.

One way and another, the mood is apathetic or sceptical. Gurus of the media, since McLuhan, are out of fashion. The changes that presumably will come in the next decade, with the accelerating advance of video cassettes and discs and of the teletext systems, no longer look quite as exciting as they did when they were first mooted. Teletext seems like a glorified and technologically advanced tape machine; and the racing results, weather reports and stock exchange prices are, after all, readily available elsewhere. The prospect of acquiring one's own library of films, to be played at will, is of course highly alluring; and as books become more expensive and electronic software drops in price, it wouldn't be surprising if within a few years films were almost as easily purchased as books.

The question remains, however, what films? Or what new films? The old idealistic notions of a liberated, strongly individual film-making practice, of films made 'like novels' as means of self-expression, are not

likely to materialise. The minority audience remains very much a minority, and the expense of reaching it remains high. The people who can afford video machines (and who, in a recent advertisement, are offered a range of titles from *Canadian Pacific* to *The Happy Hooker* by way of *Night of the Living Dead*) are unlikely to provide a home audience for structuralist, minimalist or similar experiments. The pressure within the world's film industries for imitations of past success is as high as ever. In Europe, it should be noted, French films are in a bad way, even though young directors do somehow continue to keep making them; and in Germany, despite the various aid schemes, there is a constant rumble of dissatisfaction from the film-makers.

The 70s have seen the end of the old guard: Chaplin, Renoir, Ford, Hawks, Lang, Balcon, Rossellini, Visconti, De Sica, Kozintsev, John Grierson. Only Buñuel and Hitchcock, film-makers with rather more in common than immediately meets the eye, remain as towering survivors from the generation before sound. Their juniors seem unlikely to wear so well. It's a tragedy that Orson Welles, for instance, has let a whole decade slip by without releasing a major new film. But the extreme pressures on film-makers suggest that creative careers are becoming shorter: the ability to keep going, year in and year out, depended to a considerable extent on the solid backing of old machineries which have cracked apart, and film-makers who have to dissipate so much of their energy on projects which fall apart, or on touting first for production money and then for publicity, are locked in to systems which are calculated to wear them out. For many, certainly, the 70s has been a decade of disturbingly long hiatuses. The film-makers who manage to be always productive, incessantly on the go, like Altman and Chabrol and Fassbinder, are the admirable exceptions.

All this sounds like a rather disillusioned, even positively plaintive start to a new decade. Not necessarily so. There is a great deal of energy about in film-making, much of it burrowing away at the edges in various forms of independent activity. The general spread of film education has raised expectations and there is film-making on a minuscule scale which is itself clearly related to the sort of influential critical practices developed in the last decade by *Screen* and like magazines. But what movie-making seems to need most, and may yet find, is a major new surge of creative excitement: not a new New Wave, since that expression has been devalued by all the other old waves, but a shake-up of ideas and assumptions similar to that provided twenty years ago. Looking around, it is admittedly not easy to see where it might be expected to come from, but in terms of the continuity and development and changing creative patterns that sustain the business of art, it is already overdue.

POSTSCRIPT: Judges at an event called the Worst Film Festival have just voted unanimously for *They Saved Hitler's Brain*. The film, in which the Fuehrer's brain plots a comeback from inside a marmalade jar, narrowly beat *The Terror of Tiny Town*, Hollywood's only all-midget musical Western.—*Daily Mail*, November 1979.

Michael Dempsey

APOCALYPSE NOW

Some statistics. For one shot, 1,200 gallons of gasoline burned in ninety seconds. For the climax of another sequence, over 500 smoke bombs, 100 phosphorus sticks, another 1,200 gallons of gas, 1,750 sticks of dynamite, 500 feet of detonating cord, plus 2,000 rockets, flares and tracers. Two hundred and thirty-eight shooting days. More than 1,100,000 feet of negative exposed. All this and more at a total cost of some \$31.5 million. *Apocalypse Now*.

At least, you can see it all—or most of it—on the screen. Francis Coppola's long-awaited film starts with what proves to be a nightmare: a stand of pale green palm trees, ominous air-beating chops, the fleeting blurs of attack helicopters, a sudden rush of flame engulfing the trees as, in magically perfect rhythm, Jim Morrison's high, thin voice croons, 'This is the end...' Then the dreamer of this recurring vision appears mingled with his own demonic images, in a Saigon hotel room during the Vietnam war, drunk, stunned, virtually deranged—an American captain named Benjamin Willard (Martin Sheen). Soon afterwards, his superiors send him upriver to Cambodia on a secret mission to find and kill a Green Beret colonel, Walter

Kurtz (Marlon Brando), who is rumoured to be running amok there with a private army of Montagnard tribesmen and renegade Americans.

As Willard travels with a boat crew of scared, hopped-up draftees, he increasingly finds himself in a zone of insane people and sights. An air cavalry officer, Kilgore (Robert Duvall), who gleefully massacres a Viet Cong village with his chopper force so that his surfing team can sample the offshore breakers. A mammoth, incandescent supply warehouse and USO centre suddenly materialising in the midst of trackless wilderness. A burning Huey sitting in a tree and a downed B-52 with its skyscraper tail towering out of the river. A bizarre,

'Apocalypse Now': Martin Sheen as Willard



psychedelically lit firefight at night for a flimsy wooden bridge. An inspection of a sampan, which explodes into panic-stricken slaughter of the people on board by Willard's boat crew, by this point nearly mad and definitely high on their own fear. And, finally, the lair of Kurtz, an immense temple which resembles Ankor Wat, strewn with severed heads and festooned with dangling corpses. Yes, it certainly is easy to see where the money went.

Yet the film's source, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, is a relatively simple story by the logistical standards of a production manager, briefer than the average shooting script. But, transposing the original from the Congo during the 1890s to Indo-China during the war, Coppola has enlarged the physical dimensions of the material. Only one scene, natives attacking the boat with a barrage of sticks, survives the adaptation (first written by John Milius around ten years ago) intact; and its climax, the skewering of the captain by a spear, gains extra irony now that it happens during an overwhelmingly technological modern war. Otherwise, Coppola has taken only isolated fragments from Conrad: Kurtz's name and his gleaming baldness; a clownish character in his entourage, the Harlequin, who has become Dennis Hopper's wigged-out photo-journalist; a tape recording of Kurtz musing about a snail crawling along the edge of a razor, which must derive from the overriding desire of Conrad's Willard, Marlow, to hear Kurtz's voice; a vignette of a battleship absurdly shelling the vastness of the jungle, an image from which the whole movie, with its napalmings of the same equatorial wilderness, might have sprung. And 'The horror! The horror!' In artistic terms, *Apocalypse Now* has become an epic; in financial terms, a super-production. Thus, it has mimicked its subject. 'We went insane,' Coppola admitted at Cannes. 'The film was made the way the war was fought. There were too many of us, too much money, too much equipment.'

This, too, is visible in *Apocalypse Now*; the

film's phantasmagoric rhapsody, alternately horrorstruck and mesmerised by the gore and the spectacle of warfare, feels headily insane at times in a way that connects with the eerie dislocations among American grunts which have been caught in books like Michael Herr's *Dispatches* and Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato*. In *The Rain People*, the *Godfather* films and *The Conversation* Coppola devoted himself to characterisation and storytelling, to developing dramatic structures and dialogue which analysed what he was dealing with. But *Dementia 13*, *You're A Big Boy Now* and even *Finian's Rainbow* showed that he also had a taste for purely cinematic effects; and with *Apocalypse Now* he has returned to this approach in a far more grandiose way.

Apocalypse Now seeks less to meditate on the war and more to plunge us as viscerally into it as any movie possibly can. Structurally, it is a river movie the way *Easy Rider* is a road movie, a succession of events and set-pieces. The characters are quite simple; apart from Willard and Kurtz, hardly any register for more than a sequence. Willard's boat mates suggest an updated bomber crew from World War II movies, though without the gung-ho heroism. Kilgore is a brash, expansive cartoon man who owes plenty to General Buck Turgidson in *Dr. Strangelove*. Hopper's court jester is a flashy, funny riff on his own heyday in *Easy Rider* and *The Last Movie*, the hippie as raving seer. The others—the Vietnamese woman whom Willard murders on the sampan, Willard's solemn superiors, Bill Graham's USO impresario, the bunnies he serves up to a mob of GIs, the leaderless soldiers screaming dementedly into the surrounding darkness as they try to defend the bridge—are part of a slipstream of surrealistic images and events which drifts past Willard like an ectoplasmic reverie as he proceeds up the river.

The shot of the chopper in the tree quotes from a similar image in *Aguirre, Wrath of God*, a boat high above the river which looks like a mirage to the conquistadors. Visually—with its concentration on the immensity of the

jungle, the strangeness and the intermittence of riverbank existence, the textures of the water, pristine vistas of pellucid sky through which warplanes streak and bomb, and a pervasive sense of blinding, stoned nightmare—*Apocalypse Now* draws on Herzog and probably on *Deliverance* as well. The results are nothing less than awesome—the movie frequently has the menacing visual clarity and the morbid luminescence of a De Chirico deserted plaza—and, besides all this, the film is very funny, too, as Veronica Geng stressed in her fine *New Yorker* piece.

In the programme book which was given to audiences during the film's initial engagements, when it was shown in 70 mm without credits, Coppola states that his goal was 'a film experience that would give its audience a sense of the horror, the madness, the sensuousness, and the moral dilemma of the Vietnam war.' The first three he has captured as no one else ever has. However, what Coppola means by 'moral dilemma' is not especially clear, since, like the other recent movies about Vietnam, *Apocalypse Now* says nothing about why America got involved in the war. It does show Americans committing all the atrocities which it depicts, but—again, like the other films—it also concentrates on how the war affected the Americans rather than the Vietnamese, though the sampan episode is a jolting evocation of the carnage which American firepower inflicted on the region.

It would be easy, indeed it would be child's play, to make a case against Coppola on political grounds, and any such case would almost surely have a large measure of validity. But, despite his rhetoric, Coppola is after something else. Though literally set in Vietnam and Cambodia, *Apocalypse Now* in essence takes place in some mysterious, distant land where the true issues are the terrors and the crazy thrills of combat and survival. The phantasmagoric style of the movie creates this overarching effect. In *Dispatches*, Michael Herr uses mercurial, pop-crazy prose to evoke this grunt's-eye view of the war, the demented, hallucinatory quality of ultraviolence which has become a never-ending, madly comic danse macabre precisely because no clearly defined, let alone politically or morally defensible, purpose motivates it. One of his frequent references to movies and our legacy of war movie images, 'some kind of jungle play with giant helicopters and fantastic special effects, actors lying out there in canvas body bags waiting for the scene to end so they could get up and walk it off,' reads like a prescient sketch of the film, for which he has written Willard's narration in a similar style.

Fantastic is indeed the word for the special effects, with or without irony. To some, their very majesty prettifies war, makes it exciting in the manner of the old war adventures which Herr parodies, which purport to condemn war while inducing the audience to relish its spectacle. But this is merely the same aesthetic puritanism which Mary McCarthy once falsely applied to *La Terra Trema*: that evidently beautiful imagery somehow detracts from seriousness. The images and sounds of *Apocalypse Now* have little to do with conventional anti-war sentiments. What they seek to do is capture the nature of American grandiosity, a pervasive sense of limitless power being wielded by cracked-open minds which have lost their compass, which have

'A mammoth, incandescent supply warehouse and USO centre': Bunny girls arrive by helicopter

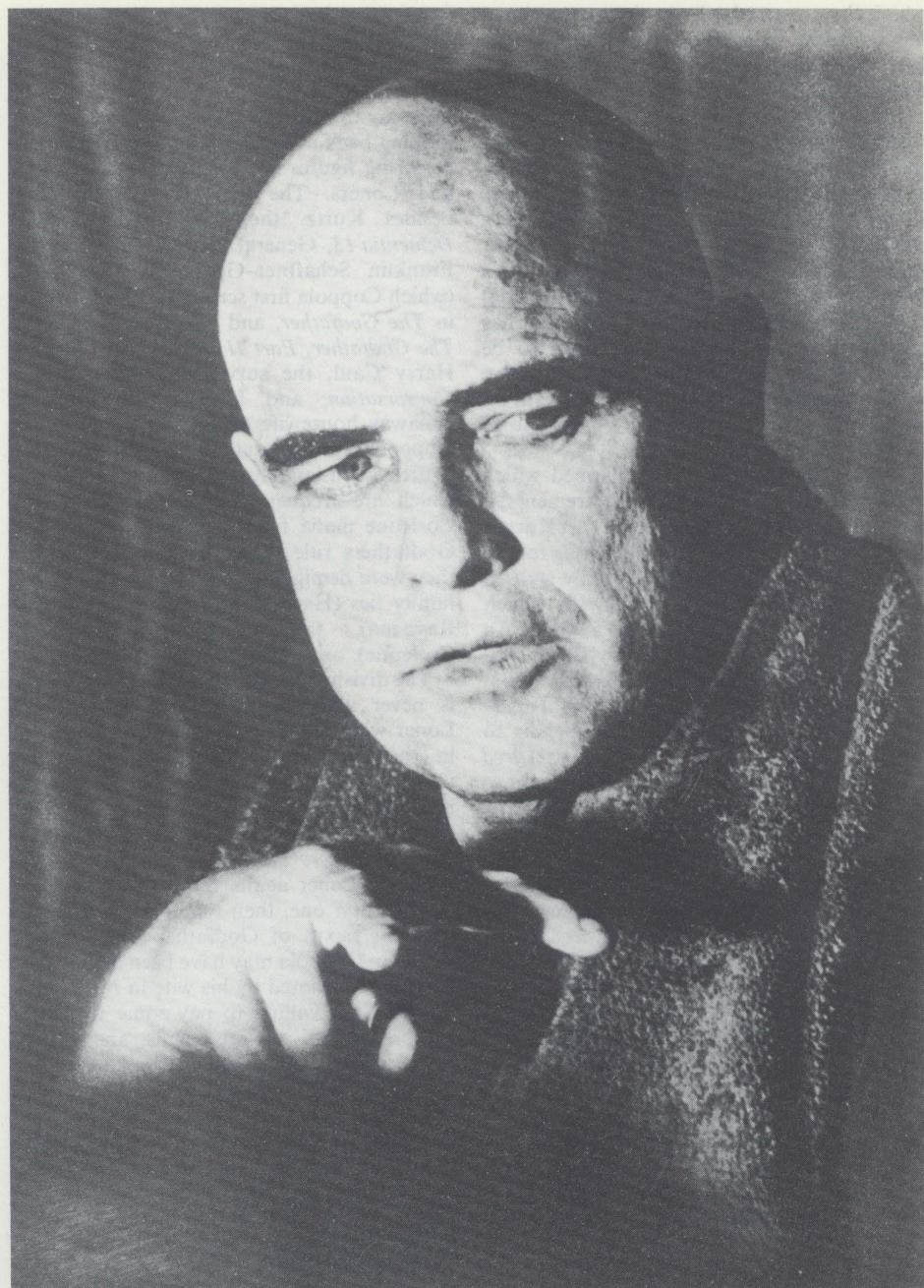


become caught up in a collective madness for its own sake. This is what Willard's journey reveals, just as Marlow's equivalent journey gradually brings to light the rapacities of colonialism. *Apocalypse Now* wants to make us experience these monstrosities, these distortions, as directly as film is capable of doing, leaving us to make of them what we will afterwards. Those who would prefer a pre-conceived, unambiguous political statement instead might do well to consult the example of Bertolucci's *1900*, which smothers its maker's richest impulses and finally destroys itself in a forced effort to project the correct leftist line on history.

The genuinely thorny matter of *Apocalypse Now* is the relationship between Kurtz and Willard. This becomes glaringly apparent in the way that the final segment of the picture shifts drastically from amphetamine action to portentous soliloquy as its prime stylistic motif. Kurtz is the principal speaker. He muses over an ethereal memory of his Midwestern homeland, quotes T. S. Eliot on the decline of the West, recounts a grotesque anecdote about how he inoculated some Vietnamese villagers against disease only to find that their vaccinated arms were then superstitiously chopped off and left in a grisly pile. We see none of this. Originally, John Milius provided an opening sequence featuring Kurtz's commandos rising like primeval monsters from a swamp to wipe out a Viet Cong patrol. But in the film, we never see Kurtz's men in action or any sign of their rapine other than the corpses and the heads strewn around his headquarters.

To a certain extent, this strategy is understandable. If Coppola showed Kurtz and his men running amok or even detailed the results of their activities, he would probably dilute the idea that what Willard experiences on the river is even worse than the crimes attributed to Kurtz. Conrad faced pretty much the same problem, but he was working with imagistic, metaphorical words which could create an aura of extreme horror without becoming too specific about its nature. Yet even he drew criticism from people like E. M. Forster and F. R. Leavis for making Kurtz too wispy, too elusive, too vague a figure. Working in a visual medium, as Coppola is doing, only heightens this conceptual problem. We have to see Kurtz in the most literal sense of the term (a Conradian term), and what we see after the build-up is basically Kurtz talking and Willard listening.

But Kurtz does hew to Conrad's characterisation; Willard, on the other hand, has been strangely reconceived. Conrad's Marlow is a stolid, sane, plodding man despite a life spent in tropical regions. So it is believable that he would feel the lure of Kurtz and his legend; they are so foreign to his nature that they can tease his imagination and as a result gradually draw him into a confrontation with everything that he has suppressed in order to become stolid, sane, plodding. But Willard is emotionally and mentally unbalanced almost from frame one. After his nightmare, he has a nervous breakdown. This was already evident in the answer print of *Apocalypse Now* which was previewed in Los Angeles on 11 May 1979 and later shown at Cannes; the completed film stresses this derangement even more forcefully, with added footage showing



Imperial warlord: Marlon Brando as Kurtz

Willard slamming his hand into a mirror and then collapsing bizarrely, bleeding and screaming. Soon we learn why: Willard is an undercover assassin for the American military who has already experienced Kurtzian madness, unlike Marlow. This makes it a trickier matter to accept the fascination which he, like Marlow, is supposed to feel the closer he gets to Kurtz and the more he hears about his legend.

Reading a classified dossier, Willard learns that one of Kurtz's primary offences in the eyes of the American high command was the unauthorised assassinations of some Vietnamese officials whom he considered Viet Cong double agents. These killings sound like just the sort of assignment which Willard has carried out; in the narration, he even speaks of having felt the last breaths of his own victims against his face. Perhaps we are supposed to surmise from this hint that Willard feels a sense of obscure kinship with Kurtz. Both have thrown off civilised restraints; both have committed brutal crimes. But Kurtz has gone infinitely further, and his reputed kingdom of horror tantalises

Willard, makes him yearn to divine its profoundest secrets, especially what it feels like to shed all restraints. Within the film's frame of reference, this seems like the only possible catalyst for Willard's interest in Kurtz. Yet *Apocalypse Now* never articulates it. Why not?

Every account published thus far about the film's stormy production (including *Notes*, a journal kept by Coppola's wife, Eleanor) has indicated that Coppola began shooting the mammoth project without a final screenplay or even a firm outline—in particular without having resolved the difficulties of the Kurtz-Willard relationship. During certain periods, his army of colleagues and equipment stood idle while he wrestled with rewrites and sessions of improvisation with some of the actors, trying to discover what he really felt and thought about his material. In other words, in spite of his genuine artistic goals, he got caught up in the same wheeler-dealer's recklessness—pyramiding a topheavy, complex, multi-million dollar set of interlocking deals and schedules on to the quicksand of a fuzzy, unshaped screenplay

which the crassest hacks in the international film industry, cold-assed businessmen who feel nothing but contempt for artists, continually get involved in.

Yet Coppola's conceptual problem remained intractable, as his indecision over the film's ending illustrates. Many in the audience have been unhappy about its change of tone when Willard arrives at Kurtz's stronghold. In some cases, this unhappiness seems to derive from the failure of Brando's Kurtz to equal the vision of a truly imperial warlord which the journey upriver has created in their minds. Others seem to be ticked off because, after watching explosive action sequences for two hours, they want an ending that will top the rest of the movie purely on a gut level.

Originally, an ending was planned which might well have satisfied both requirements: a mighty ground-and-air assault on Kurtz's base by both American and Viet Cong forces, the entire sequence photographically stylised to look like a terminal cataclysm which would live up to the movie's title. An elaborate, multi-coloured storyboard was prepared by continuity illustrator Tom Wright in the style of his work on *Family Plot*, samples of which form an appendix to Donald Spoto's book, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*. Even on paper, the sequence looked truly volcanic. It seems that Coppola actually shot this storyboard but then, in what must have been a staggering sacrifice after going through such a hell, threw it away during post production. One can guess his dilemma. On the one hand, here was a super-battle which would have blown the audience sky high on purely visceral thrills. In addition, it might have done justice to the vaunted legend of Kurtz by presenting him as a barbaric yet majestic commander who is truly capable of staggering military feats. If so, Coppola's difficulties in making him a convincing figure might have been solved. Yet, on the other hand, perhaps the sheer magnitude of this sequence would have destroyed the urgency of Willard's moral choice, when he is confronted by the opportunity to replace Kurtz. Perhaps it would have turned into a mere terror jamboree, however impressive as a spectacle, rendering the movie hopelessly hypocritical and meaningless.

Thus, it appears, did Coppola find himself trapped in the morass of a late-70s super-production without an ending. The Cannes-Los Angeles answer print stopped with Willard undecided, Lady or Tiger style, about whether or not to replace Kurtz at the head of his worshipful followers. The final version has added footage which shows him definitely rejecting this chance and sailing away back down the river. Commercially, this quiet conclusion was a brave choice; if the film fails at the box office, this decision could be the ultimate reason. (After its initial engagements, *Apocalypse Now* will be shown in 35 mm, with credits at the end laid over napalm explosions taken from the original climax, but this sounds like graphic artwork rather than another conclusion to the film.) But this ending is not satisfying artistically, either, for it still leaves Kurtz inadequately portrayed. Perhaps Conrad's original conception is out of date; surely the crimes of his Kurtz are nothing to those of Coppola's, which seek to symbolise 20th century savagery which Conrad could only have

imagined at best. It is all the more damaging, then, that we never see why Kurtz fascinates Coppola as he does Willard.

One way of possibly teasing out an answer is looking back at his other films, in which two recurring figures are prominent: Godfathers and Loners. The first category includes, besides Kurtz, the crazed matriarch of *Dementia 13*, General George Patton in the Franklin Schaffner-George C. Scott film (which Coppola first scripted), Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*, and Michael Corleone in *The Godfather, Part II*. Along with Willard, Harry Caul, the surveillance man of *The Conversation*, and Natalie Ravenna, the runaway housewife of *The Rain People*, are Coppola's prime examples of Loners. Both figures are intimately connected with families, which are frequently tribes of killers (the Corleone mafia family, Kurtz's army). The Godfathers rule these families almost as if they were demigods. The Loners try to deny family ties (Harry Caul), flee them (Natalie Ravenna), take them over (Michael Corleone), or annihilate them (Willard).

The division between Godfather and Loner is never absolute. Michael Corleone is a Loner when he seeks to avoid entanglement in the Corleone crime syndicate in *The Godfather*, but by the end of the film he is its new commander, which eventually, after he has eliminated all his enemies at the end of *The Godfather, Part II*, returns him to the status of Loner again. Similarly, Kurtz has become first one, then the other. The chord that this nexus of Godfather-Loner-Family strikes in Coppola may have been hinted at in a statement quoted by his wife in *Notes*, that he would be willing to pay some woman a million dollars to raise kids and run a traditional kind of home life for him.

In *Apocalypse Now*, Kurtz suggests a Godfather at bay, swollen with power yet unable to satisfy his deepest longings. Orson Welles' abortive version of *Heart of Darkness* evidently would have drawn parallels not only between Kurtz and Hitler but between Kurtz and Welles himself. Comparably, Coppola has said, 'I found that many of the ideas and images with which I was working as a film director began to coincide with the realities of my own life, and that I, like Captain Willard, was moving up a river in a faraway jungle, looking for answers and hoping for some kind of catharsis.' Even allowing for a certain amount of hubris, this sounds odd, for it is Kurtz, rather than Willard, who suggests a self-portrait. And catharsis of what?

Coppola has not only made movies about Godfathers; he has also become one. For years, he has been seeking to make himself Promethean, both as an artist and as a mogul. His attempts to amass and hold on to a private film-making empire in San Francisco and Los Angeles testify to a dream of attaining the same corporate authority which old-line studio chiefs also held. Yet Coppola also wants to put this power at the service of lofty artistic ideals. Analogies between his ambitions and Kurtz's reveries spring readily to mind; Coppola, too, has his extended family and would be king, though a benevolent one.

In this light, the hugest sequence in *Apocalypse Now*, Kilgore's air raid, is worth examining in some extra detail. It is a thundering, majestic spectacle: some two

dozen gunships annihilating a hamlet utterly in a barbaric demonstration of overkill. But, although it shows plenty of agony, it is no anti-war sequence, for we experience it primarily through the eyes of war lover Kilgore, a maniac in a black stetson who orchestrates the entire assault like grand opera, even heralding his approach with stereophonic blasts of Wagner because 'it scares the shit out of the slopes.' Every element in the sequence, including the suffering of the victims, expresses his unabashed delight in being an overwhelming attacker: the mass take-off at dawn, with a bugler blowing fanfares; the deep focus long shots of the full armada in flight through skies of glowing clarity; the close-ups of spouting machine guns and flaming rockets intercut with their devastation below. Like Sam Peckinpah's *Cross of Iron* and practically no other film, this attack visualises the trance-like exhilaration of full-scale modern combat. Coppola's magisterial shooting style and Robert Duvall's daring comic performance pull us so far into Kilgore's demented vision that we almost feel a pang of sympathy when, after exulting over a napalm inferno, he suddenly begins musing about the end of the war and, unable to think of what to say about that, walks offscreen.

Kilgore's exhilaration is also Coppola's: the exhilaration of an unchecked movie director with virtually limitless millions (more than half his own) to spend exactly as he pleases conceiving this stupendous tableau, unleashing his film-making army like a world-bestriding field marshal, and later honing it to overpowering perfection in the most sophisticated cutting and mixing rooms available. Coppola even acknowledges how neatly the twin technologies of film and the military dovetail when he does a momentary Hitchcock in another scene, playing a TV director yelling at soldiers to keep on fighting normally without looking at the camera.

For most film-makers, bedevilled continually by finance and financiers, this level of power and temperament—Wagnerian, Kurtzian, and Barnum-and-Baileyian all rolled into one—is a Holy Grail. Yet in multiple ways it can also be another kind of prison. People like Coppola are expected to produce masterpieces at will each time they make a movie; they expect it of themselves; anything less is considered almost a disgrace, a betrayal. Each new production, like the latest edition of a circus, must top its predecessors in the most vulgar sense of the word, as so many want the ending of *Apocalypse Now* to top the scenes which precede it. When he made *The Conversation* in the wake of *The Godfather*, Coppola appeared to have escaped this syndrome of escalating gigantism, but (right now anyway) it looks like a false respite.

This is not merely a matter of elephantine budgets. According to figures published in *Variety* (22 August 1979), *Moonraker* cost \$32 million, the latest version of *Flash Gordon* is capitalised at \$35 million, the film *Star Trek* will expend \$40 million on production expenses, and the price for the two *Superman* movies will total at least \$50 million. As high rolling business propositions, all these items surpass *Apocalypse Now*. No, the grandiosity of Coppola is a matter of colossal fantasies of art, fantasies which only a particular kind of film director can possibly hope to challenge.

One imagines a film-maker like Coppola supposing that, with such power and wealth as he commands, vistas of artistic magnificence ought to lie within his grasp. Certainly, the scale of *Apocalypse Now* suggests an all-out assault on Greatness, Meaning, Art.

Yet art proves to be elusive, with or without the capital A, just as victory did to the nearly unbridled military might of America during the Vietnam war. The beached, inert figure of Kurtz bears witness to this frustration; like Coppola, he has gone the limit in trying to attain not just ecstasy but permanent ecstasy, yet it remains mockingly out of reach. This same intimation, that existence is fundamentally hollow and ultimately disappointing, afflicts all the major Coppola characters, and the sombreness of his cinematic vision bears further witness to

it. When (in a departure from Conrad) Willard the Loner kills Kurtz the Godfather, we are meant to understand it as a mercy killing which releases Kurtz from unbearable loneliness and despair. Perhaps, symbolically, Coppola the Godfather is dying at the hands of Coppola the Loner, who might be his younger self from the days when he was merely an artist.

Griffith, Gance, Visconti, Fellini, Bertolucci, Kubrick, Welles, Peckinpah, Boorman—they and numerous others have trodden this ground too, flirting with and often achieving disaster in a manner at once lunatic and awe-inspiring. Intoxicated with the notion of the Ultimate Movie, they have dealt with the grandest of themes: universal love, the roots of Nazism, the history of the peasantry and capitalism, the careers of the noble, among others. Even the moral

dilemma of Vietnam. But the special quality of these Ultimate Movies, whatever their ostensible theme and regardless of how good or bad they turned out to be, is their pursuit of film's most siren-like promise: that disappointment with life—not merely with this or that socio-economic system but with life itself—can be assuaged for good. In secular terms, what film-makers caught up in such projects are really seeking is utopia; in religious terms, it is paradise. *Intolerance*, *Napoleon*, *Greed*, *The Damned*, *Ludwig*, 8 1/2, 2001, *Casanova*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Citizen Kane*, 1900, *Barry Lyndon*, *Exorcist II: The Heretic*, and *Apocalypse Now*... some succeed, some fail strictly as treatments of their themes. *Apocalypse Now* does both. But their true significance may lie in their very existence as Nimrod's Arrows disappearing into unattainable dreams.

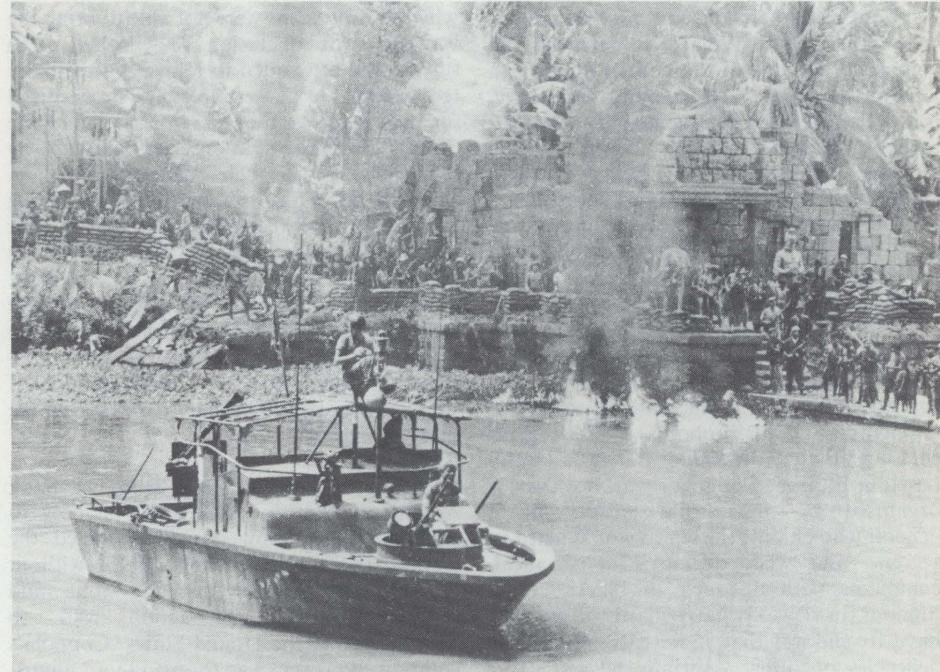
APOCALYPSE NOW

An Errand Boy's Journey

John Pym

On a calm evening (the year is unspecified, but the time is the colonial 19th century), on the deck of a cruising yawl at anchor in the Thames estuary, the sailor Charlie Marlow begins the story of his river journey into central Africa to find Mr Kurtz, the 'lost' agent of a European trading company. Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* opens with what appears to be a conventional piece of scene-setting: the vessel is waiting for the tide; those on board have time to kill; the dominoes have been brought out. It soon becomes plain, however, that the frame of the narrative—the enveloping night; the backdrop of the 'monstrous town' (London); the distanced perspective of the anonymous listener, the novel's narrator; the reverberations of Marlow's ruminations on the Thames itself—is in fact an indispensable part of the novel's design. The frame, indeed, fixes and throws into relief a moral on the fragility of 'civilisation' which Conrad—spinning a self-protective and increasingly dense cocoon of words and abstractions—found almost too harrowing to contemplate.

Conrad constructed the narrative within the novel, the story of Marlow's journey, from his own punishing experiences in the Congo in 1890, and—between the abstractions—he described in a tone of dry sarcasm the company in the 'sepulchral city' (Brussels) which had employed him, and with vivid detail the barbarities it practised on the African people. In particular, he caught the 'strangeness' of Africa to a Westerner: at one point, for instance, a great hippo pads at night through one of the river trading-posts, impervious to the white men's fusillades. Marlow's story is developed symmetrically: his plain man's disenchantment with the company officials and their obsession with ivory grows more complete the further upriver he penetrates; and his unexpected fascination with Kurtz, the shadowy, demented idealist who has become a lawless butcher, increases the further he himself



The patrol boat moored off Kurtz's kingdom

departs from civilisation. It ends with a crucial denouement when, having prevented the dying Kurtz from regaining the jungle, Marlow returns to Europe and visits Kurtz's fiancée. He finds that he cannot bring himself to repeat Kurtz's last words ('The horror, the horror', the authentic summary of all his experiences), and instead claims that the noble man who had slipped into the abyss of savagery had in fact uttered the woman's name.

In adapting a version of *Heart of Darkness* for the screen, by way of a rewritten script by John Milius, Francis Coppola has adhered more closely to his source than might be thought from the absence of Conrad's name on any of the film's official credit lists. Updated to the recent past and relocated

(via Philippine locations) in Vietnam and Cambodia, *Apocalypse Now* unfolds as a personal, remembered odyssey. In a Saigon hotel room, the Marlow figure, the assassin Captain Willard, lies on a bed waiting for a mission. His disembodied voice, coming from some future time, comments on what we are about to see. 'I was going to the worst place in the world and I didn't even know it yet. Weeks away and hundreds of miles up a river that snaked through the war like a main circuit cable and plugged straight into Kurtz.'

Conrad was able to connect Marlow's story to the history of mankind largely by the skill with which he located the precise circumstances of its telling. The yawl is anchored at the head of one of the great arteries of the world; and the captain,

engrossed in Marlow's story, misses the ebb tide which would have taken them out to sea, to confront—in the author's symbolic terms—the boundaries of the unconscious. Marlow has given his listeners, who include, as well as the narrator, those solid citizens a lawyer and an accountant, pause. To reproduce Conrad's frame was clearly not feasible. One could not imagine Willard (who was in any case no sailor) spinning a yarn on some American waterway. However, by failing to find a cinematic equivalent, while at the same time squaring up to and broadening the moral issues of the novel, Coppola begged difficulties. In the event, Willard's mission seems to take place in a curious vacuum: it is, to be sure, located in an unforgettable, all-too-real period, but it takes place in circumstances somehow irretrievably cut off from an authentic wider context.

Despatched up the Nung river with secret orders to cross into Cambodia and execute Colonel Kurtz, the maverick Special Forces officer waging his own unauthorised war, Willard (Martin Sheen) spends much of the journey in the silent contemplation of Kurtz's dossier. His fellow travellers, the crew of the patrol boat, are emblematic Americans who, with the exception of the taciturn black captain, desire only to return home and take up where they left off (cooking, surfing, jiving). 'The trouble is,' Willard remembers, 'I'd been back there and I knew it just didn't exist any more.' Willard is referring, of course, to the idea of the United States as a land of assurance and stability; ironically, however, he is also commenting on the filmmaker's attitude to the world outside Vietnam. It just doesn't exist. And, in addition, the 'strangeness' of Vietnam—a beautiful rather than a dark country—is decisively undercut by the film's emphasis on the ease with which the Americans are able to duplicate there the conditions of 'home'.

Willard's initial briefing does not take place in an equivalent to the 'sepulchral city', but in a small room in Nha Trang base (filmed tight in to increase a sense of anonymous claustrophobia). The great company that is despoiling Africa is clearly based in Europe; Coppola's war, however, is organised by phantasmal powers—by a general who enjoins the compliant Willard to secrecy, and who, during a lavish meal, comments with a touch of black, unreal humour (in view of what Willard will actually have to endure) that if he eats one of the delicacies on offer, a shrimp, he will never have to prove his bravery in any other way. Marlow, a free spirit, actively seeks out a position with the company. Willard, however much he may have wanted and needed a 'mission', is nevertheless in the end locked into his fate and ordered to take one.

Conrad underlines the link between Africa and Europe (and the rest of the world) by charting Marlow's journey from 'civilisation' to 'darkness'. Willard, however, never believes himself to be anywhere but at the very heart of an insane war. Before he has even reached the head of the river he finds himself a bewildered spectator at a mopping-up operation commanded by Kilgore (Robert Duvall), an officer whose dementia is signalled by a canary-coloured dickie and an immaculate horse soldier's hat. Marlow, on the way to the river, passed a French man-of-war engaged in a minor colonial war; it was

lying off the coast and firing aimlessly inland; firing, it seemed, at the whole continent of Africa. Conrad's Kurtz found himself submitting to, though ultimately reviling, a sort of primitive, innate lawlessness, symbolised by Africa itself; Kilgore and Coppola's Kurtz are fighting with boneheaded commitment a wholly ruthless *civilisation*, composed of mortal human beings who are often liable to die (as in the mopping-up operation) not in anonymity but before a television camera.

In the film's cinematic *pièce de résistance*, the attack on a coastal village near the head of the Nung River, Coppola draws attention to the fact that what the helicopters are about to destroy, flying in over the surf like a swarm of malevolent insects, is not 'darkness' but 'peace' itself. In an abrupt cut from the racketing helicopters, a woman in white shepherds a group of children, dressed in matching blue and white school uniforms, across a shining white patio.

When Willard reaches the 'temple' compound and finds the ailing Kurtz, Coppola finally gets to the heart of his purpose. In the film's key speech, Kurtz (played with sententious authority by Marlon Brando) lays out the root cause of his behaviour. He witnessed the aftermath of an atrocity—the enemy entered one of their own villages and cut off the arms of children who had been inoculated by the Americans—which gave him a sudden, terrible insight into why the Americans were not able to bring the war to a swift conclusion. They lacked, as he saw it (and attempted to remedy), the ability to behave in a completely desensitised manner, to prove they were not afraid of the powers of darkness, in order to vanquish, by sheer force of will, such a determined enemy. This is the conclusion of a man being groomed, as Willard has discovered, for perhaps the very highest position in the American armed forces; and Coppola, through Kurtz, puts a version of the military's case for why the Americans failed to win in Vietnam. He chooses to ignore, however, any broader consideration of whether they had the right to contest it in the first place.

Coppola, as his wife reveals in her book *Notes*, was for long undecided on how to end *Apocalypse Now*. Having rejected the Conradian frame, it was impossible—without a wrenching change of both tone and content—to take the action back to 'civilisation' in the United States. Coppola's solution, however, was to execute an almost equally wrenching change in narrative direction: to make the story not more 'real' (to have pursued, perhaps, the implications of Kurtz's standpoint), but more 'mythical'. Or at least to try to suggest—for it amounts to no more than this—mythical undertones. By having Kurtz in his temple sanctuary read a portion of T. S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men' (which takes its epigraph from *Heart of Darkness*), Coppola attempts to shift Kurtz into an abstract poetic realm. More specifically, however, the director invokes the shade of another imposing literary figure, Sir James Frazer, whose study of magic and religion *The Golden Bough* is glimpsed among Kurtz's belongings.*

* For a discussion of the implied significance of this reference, see John Tessitore's article 'The Literary Roots of *Apocalypse Now*' in the *New York Times*, 21 October 1979.

Kurtz's Montagnard followers, impersonated by members of a primitive tribe of Ifugao Indians, are first seen ranged in mute tableaux round the temple and effectively set the seal on the tonal change. Their aura, however, is one of unease; and the horrors of the compound, the trunkless heads and tortured remains, register as little more than stage props. The realism of what has gone before—the attack on the coastal village; the massacre of the non-hostile Vietnamese on board a sampan; the sequence at the last, fairy-lit bridge before Cambodia (the surreal authenticity of which Michael Herr attests to in his book *Dispatches*)—gives way to images of self-conscious mysticism and timelessness. Kurtz himself becomes, as John Tessitore argues, one of Frazer's 'Divine Kings'. He finds his strength ebbing and must be killed by someone younger and stronger so that his power, on which depends the stability of the world, will not be lost.

Conrad was able, carefully keeping Kurtz himself and the people who worshipped him in the background, to establish the mythical 'reality' of what had happened to Kurtz, by the mesmeric force of his intense repetitive descriptions of the feel of the jungle, of Africa itself. Coppola, however, until the last section of the film, neglects a comparable emphasis, concentrating instead, between the bravura action sequences, on Willard's reading of Kurtz's dossier and the characters of the men on the boat. Only on one occasion does he suggest the mystery of the land itself: Willard and one of the men, 'Chef', go into the jungle in search of mangos when they are surprised by a springing Blakean tiger. As a result, when Coppola seeks to relocate Kurtz in a mystic/literary context, the spectator has been supplied with no previous points of reference. The handling in such consummate cinematic terms of all the action sequences has led one, irrationally perhaps, to expect a similar seamlessness in the film's narrative flow. Up to a point, Coppola has achieved this: his disparate episodes are linked with considerable if rather artificially heightened effect by Willard's voice-over narrative (written, it seems, after shooting was completed, by Michael Herr). Nothing, however, has quite prepared one for the end.

Willard is captured and tortured: he is kept in a bamboo cage; the severed head of Chef is thrown into his lap. And then, finally, he is forced to confront the figure with whom he has increasingly identified himself. 'Are you an assassin?' Kurtz asks. 'I'm a soldier,' Willard replies. 'You're neither,' Kurtz says. 'You are an errand boy sent by grocery clerks to collect a bill.' The bald Kurtz (in Conrad his dome reflected the ivory with which he too had become obsessed) has in fact precisely summed up Willard's character. He is no Conradian free spirit, with his fidelity to the laws of the ocean to guide him, but a man who in the end kills rather than tries to save Kurtz because his orders have been countersigned by the victim himself. Charged by Kurtz to carry back to his son his typewritten 'testament' (which allegedly cuts through the lies behind the war), Willard departs down-river. Marlow realised that Kurtz's fiancée, not having been to the heart of darkness, was in no position to understand what had happened to the man she loved. Willard will return with the local news that, in these cruel days, if you wish to win a war, you must play with no rules and the gloves off. ■



Peter Brook shooting 'Meetings with Remarkable Men'

PETER BROOK: What attracted me to this project was, quite specifically, my co-scenarist, Jeanne de Salzmann. For two reasons. The first was that she had spent almost all her life working with Gurdjieff. This seemed to me a rather unique opportunity: to make a semi-biographical film about someone who had lived in a very unconventional way, with the chance of getting close to a first-hand impression. For once, it would be possible to enter an area as tricky as the esoteric through an authentic channel.

The other reason was that, if one can believe the testimony of people who have attempted to film biographical material, families and close friends are usually a pain in the neck, often preventing the subject from being treated with real understanding and honesty. In our case, it was exactly the opposite. Madame de Salzmann had herself, purely for archive purposes, shot seven or eight documentaries on the dances and exercises which comprise the final sequence of the film. She was, therefore, considerably involved in the relationship between movement in an essentially literal sense, which is what these exercises are all about, and movement as a cinematic parameter. Which meant that, although she was in no way a professional film-maker, here was someone whose interest extended beyond the purely biographical into the fundamental question of adapting such material for film.

I was also stimulated by the idea of entering virgin territory, as it were, the field of inner experience being, perhaps, the least explored by the cinema. There are certain fields—violence comes immediately to mind—whose every fine shade has been thoroughly exploited. But, between the biblical at one extreme and the psychedelic at the other, there is a massive area concerning the esoteric which has not been touched at all.

The film deals exclusively with Gurdjieff's youth. But in subsequent years his reputation, as documented in sensational memoirs, became primarily that of a charlatan. Does the fact of taking Gurdjieff at his own estimation, as you have done, imply that you find him a totally credible figure?

Through making this film, I've obviously met and talked to a number of people who knew Gurdjieff intimately. I really have every reason to believe that the lurid side of his later years in no way constitutes the whole story, or even the most significant part of the story. He was without doubt an extraordinarily colourful figure, but this, which attracted the headlines, was what interested me least. Besides, there had already been films and plays on the theme of the sexy, sensational sorcerer—a sort of Citizen Kane of black magic. You know, undertaking a film represents an enormous commitment in time, in energy. You have to be totally convinced.

As a matter of fact, at the period when I began working in the theatre, I knew Aleister Crowley very well. On my very first production, *Doctor Faustus*, I employed him as magical consultant, our adviser on how to perform the various rituals, and so on. This was all very colourful, very amusing and we became great chums. After the success of *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*, a film with such a

A Meeting with PETER BROOK

Gilbert Adair

Peter Brook's latest film, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, based on Gurdjieff's memoir of his early years, opened in London last autumn. A month or so previously, the Royal Shakespeare Company had presented his *Antony and Cleopatra*, with Glenda Jackson and Alan Howard. Both were controversial productions; neither (so far as the present writer is concerned) was satisfactory. But the controversy surrounding Brook's theatrical *mises en scène* has always worked to the advantage of his immense reputation, which was in no way damaged by the generally mixed notices received by *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the cinema, however, this controversy has tended to be much less positively slanted. His films generate curiosity rather than excitement. Their subject-matter is invariably interesting but too eclectic—Gay, Marguerite Duras, William Golding, Peter Weiss, Shakespeare and now Gurdjieff—to repay thematic analysis. (Impossible, for instance, to envisage Brook working without the support of a pre-existent discourse.) And though, given this eclecticism, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what is lacking, there is a widespread feeling that he has never been animated by the kind of *sensual* fascination with the medium that is the principal and sometimes the only qualification of many younger directors. I share this feeling, a fact of which Peter Brook was forewarned when he granted the following interview. But, speaking to the man after seeing his film, it struck me that, in art, it is not always polished surfaces that best reflect the artist's face; and, as I hope this interview will show, Brook's films, whatever the problems they present, are true reflections of his own fastidious, inquiring intelligence.



Pogossian (Donald Sumpter) and Gurdjieff (Dragan Maksimovic) in the mountains of Armenia

protagonist would have been very easy to finance. But I really am not interested in telling stories that others have already told quite satisfactorily.

What we had in mind was not a film *about* Gurdjieff, but a straight adaptation of his book. At the beginning of the book, Gurdjieff lists a number of questions which were constantly being put to him. 'What strange experiences did you have as a young man?' 'What remarkable people did you meet in the course of your travels?' 'What ideas influenced you?' 'Is there such a thing as the soul?' The only way he could answer these was to write a book. And he wrote a text that clearly is neither literal nor invented, but whose mixture of truth and fables we set out to reproduce as faithfully as possible. Now when someone asked me, 'Why didn't you show his womanising?', I could only answer that I was making a film of the book, in which there is not a single reference to womanising. Gurdjieff was notorious for his swearing and cursing, but you won't find a trace of this in the book. And I had no reason or interest to film it from the point of view of hindsight, especially as the sources of that hindsight were not necessarily reliable. Just as, when I adapted *Lord of the Flies*, I wasn't concerned to discover what William Golding's hang-ups might have been.

I have to say that, for me, one of the most problematic aspects of your adaptation is that Gurdjieff, far from being the flamboyant shaman, as you say, appears as quite an empty figure, a void at the centre of the film.

It's interesting that you should say that, and I shall try to answer very precisely. If you study the film's imagery carefully, you will see that we tried to shoot it in a particular style which, after the event, one might term 'naïve'. Naturally, one doesn't just sit down and ask oneself what style a film is going to be made in—academic, revolutionary, experimental or naïve? But the visual texture of this film comes closest, perhaps, to that of a *Grandma Moses* or *Douanier Rousseau*.

Every film has a story-line whose central concept can be boiled down to the minuscule synopsis which you will find in something like *Screen International*. So that the rest of what constitutes its global narrative context is a form of *coating* applied on to this very thin résumé. The question is, how much coating should be applied and what kind? Whatever is added one way will detract from something else. At one extreme, there is the rarefied, absolutely transparent line of, say, Bresson's cinema; at the other, the naturalistic, anecdotal, enormously detailed canvas of so many good American directors. Without wishing to set up any hierarchy, Munk's *Passenger* on the one hand and *The Deer Hunter* on the other.

Here the idea was, quite deliberately, *not* to build up the character, as in naïve paintings, so that the focus is rather on the experience. In early Italian religious art, where you have idealised, unlocalised figures, the experience is suggested by the play of formal relationships, proportions and colours. Then you come to the Dutch school, where an Annunciation, or whatever, is inserted into the coating of middle-class life. An angel is dressed like a burgemeister; he is given a cloak with, perhaps, a chain of office. In this film, our aim was very much to work through hints and suggestions, with neither primary nor secondary characters nor even background detail developed beyond a certain point. To this end, we edited and re-edited drastically.

But this notion of naïveté, from Quattrocento art to the Douanier Rousseau, presupposes a high degree of stylisation. How would you relate this to your concept of 'coating'?

Have you seen Paradjanov's *The Colour of Pomegranates*? Well, that's a great film, but its approach—that formalised and stylistically uniform aesthetic—is the contrary of what I was trying to achieve. *Meetings with Remarkable Men* is, basically, just that: a series of encounters which must be, by their very nature, static. There was no

point in making them otherwise. Even the dance sequences at the end, though much livelier, are presented in a static, head-on way. But, since I wanted to avoid being excessively rarefied, I tried to weave these scenes together with a simple adventure story. There again, however, the characters remain subservient to the narrative movement.

The dialogue is certainly stylised.

Many people have been shocked by it. As always, I sought to eliminate all the chit-chat which, for better or worse, accompanies our day-to-day existence. There isn't a moment in this or any other of my films where someone says, 'Hello. How are you? Had a good night?' and so on. The relationship between Gurdjieff and his father, for example, is expressed by the very first shot of the two of them walking together. In a highly concentrated way, I think the spectator gets everything he needs to know. No further coating is necessary. Very early on, we weighed up and rejected the possibility of showing life in the home. There was a mum, you know, and even sisters; but Gurdjieff, in his book, makes only a fleeting reference to them. Everything is selective. Either you accept our set of rules or you don't.

It was less the naturalistic dialogue that bothered me than the presence of several well-known English actors with somewhat actorish voices, which struck me as unsuitable for this kind of semi-documentary film.

It is a problem, I agree. How does one make such a film that it will appear all of a piece? Ideally, of course, one would have the actors speaking in the language of the characters they portray, except that it would seriously reduce one's audience. I can only repeat that our priority was to communicate as clearly as possible the essential of Gurdjieff's exchanges with the 'remarkable men'.

We come to the problem of representing spirituality in art.

In a way, it's a problem which has always interested me. In *Moderato Cantabile*, for example, there was a similar process of elimination and concentration, the real film taking place on a semi-invisible level, the real story being told through a gesture of the hand or a flicker behind the eyes. And again in *King Lear* I was exploring the same area. It began, if you remember, with lots of busy realistic detail which was pared away until, in the final scene, the landscape was barely sketched in at all. In the theatre, too, it's been a major preoccupation of mine.

The question which fascinates me is, how do you show what cannot be seen? I think the temptation—and, therefore, the danger—is to *illustrate*, on the principle of dream sequences, first-person camerawork and subliminal editing. Not that I reject this kind of expressive device *in toto*; one has only to look at *Marat-Sade*, where everything—even in the original stage version—was highly cinematic, jagged, frenzied, producing an impression of chaos on the spectator. With *Meetings*, as I have said, we were concerned rather with modes of suggestion and evocation. In this, the music plays an essential role, which is not merely to dramatise or underscore the action but to sustain certain narrative movements. If the particular movement is no longer there visually, the

music sustains it until it is picked up again by the image.

This was the pattern of the film: to alternate an abstract side—through colours and music—with more purely documentary aspects of film-making—the precise rendering of faces, landscapes and townships. The film was shot in Afghanistan, which I first visited fifteen years ago. I found it the most spiritual country I had ever been to, an impression formed by concrete, tangible things like the look in people's eyes, the way they moved, the way they sat down, the way they moved from sitting to standing. These are all elements of body language of interest to a director, as they speak of quite specific things.

It's unfortunate, but gurus, High Lamas and such have been subject to so much parody that it has become difficult to accept with a straight face the image of the wise man sitting cross-legged under a tree. Were you conscious of this cliché?

It was of no importance. I took it head on. The spectator has to take it or leave it, as he chooses. And you have to accept that if you go to the East, you will very likely see some wise man sitting cross-legged under a tree. Which does not mean there aren't any wise men in the West, sitting on plastic chairs with a telephone at hand.

While we were location-hunting, we travelled to a monastery on the Tibetan border, which was as remote a spot as you could hope to find. It necessitated two days' rough jeep ride over very high country, so high we had to stop every ten yards to get our breath back. Well, we finally arrived at this vast monastery, to enter which one needed a hundred introductions or so. A little boy who spoke no language at all, just a very obscure dialect, led us through corridors and corridors of incredible beauty to a door which was the entrance to the abbot's cell. As the little boy tapped on the door, I knelt down to remove my shoes and noticed there was a doormat with the word 'Welcome' in English! Now how that object found its way across the Tibetan mountains to the very threshold of the Holy of Holies I shall never know!

Gurdjieff's questions are never really

answered. We never discover the nature of the 'truth'.

No formulated, pat answer, certainly. But he began to wonder whether such a school for human development could actually exist outside this very special context. And the school is a physical reality, after all; a human being will undergo a series of exercises with his organism, his mental and physical equipment, and acquire something he won't acquire any other way. So, in a sense, it's an enormous answer. But what interested me was the search for that answer, the physical realities of the search.

I had the same feeling about *Lord of the Flies*. As a work of fiction, the book was beautiful and glamorous; and when we made that small-budget, black-and-white movie, we realised we were creating something less beautiful but which would bring precise documentary evidence to bear on the fiction. You saw the horrors on that island, you saw the boys turning into monsters. Whether it was acting or not, it was all there in front of the spectator. As a book, it remained a fable; what the filming adds is the evidence of the actors and myself participating in a first-hand experience. In the last scene of *Meetings*, the spectator is made aware that these people would not be dancing thus were it not for the existence of a school very different from what we usually understand by that word.

The dances and exercises are quite strange and beautiful as a spectacle, which is how they are perceived in the cinema. But how is the spectator to relate them to the various metaphysical questions posed by Gurdjieff?

This is very interesting *à propos* of something I've often observed in the theatre. That is, if actors are working from the right impulses, you never have to give them a detailed briefing. There is a terribly old-fashioned kind of direction, which consists of blocking the actors, instructing them in their movements to create an attractive and satisfying stage picture. But if you give actors the right impulses, you find that wherever they go, whatever move they make, it's going to seem right. If they are working from the wrong kind of spontaneity, the result will only

be confused and ugly. The actor must find within himself certain mysterious principles of order in movement, which is much less easy than when you are immobile.

But in the theatre the spectator may receive such movements and gestures as he wishes. The dances in your film are the culmination of a narrative. The spectator is not only watching the dances, he is watching Gurdjieff watching them, and this alters his perception.

Cinema is the most all-pervasive brain-washing medium ever invented. This is its power. The average spectator tends to give himself up to it totally, which is why the cinema—unlike the theatre—is unsuited to suggestion. The better the theatre—by which I mean, the less scenery, the fewer props—the more an actor can suggest without spelling everything out. Which puts the spectator in a more adult position, because he can absorb the suggestion and complete it with his own imagination.

Did you see our *Ubu Roi*?* The only props were a rope, a cable-drum and a few blocks of stone. What we offered was real audience participation. The audience didn't have to participate by jumping up and down, but they were given a number of incomplete images which they could complete and enjoy completing. In the cinema it's very different, because the spectator's relation to what is happening on the screen is passive. He is fed.

There are exceptions.

Of course. But it's very difficult. *Moderato Cantabile*, for example. People were either bored out of the cinema or riveted by what was a very quiet film whose images they were invited to complete or not, as they pleased. It divided audiences in two and, as it was a real labour of love for me, I used to divide them myself—into friends and not-friends. At the end of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*—the ballet sequence—everything is there, everything you need to know. Perhaps, though, unless you are specially predisposed to the subject, you will have to see the film a second time. I would be interested to know your reaction.

* At the Bouffes du Nord, Paris, 1978.

Meeting with Father Giovanni (Tom Fleming), head of a monastery of the World Brotherhood



EDINBURGH FILM FESTIVAL

BRITAIN AT EDINBURGH

Allan T. Sutherland

'The Tempest': Heathcote Williams as Prospero



One very refreshing aspect of an otherwise faintly disappointing 1979 Edinburgh Film Festival was the heartening range and quality of the British films on show. Significantly, they demonstrated the growing importance of independent production, however that rather loose expression is understood, in current British cinema.

This is true even of Ridley Scott's *Alien*, a multi-million pound production for 20th Century-Fox. Having served a long apprenticeship as a director of advertising films, Scott ventured into feature production in 1977 with *The Duellists*, made with the backing of the National Film Finance Consortium on a relatively low budget (in this context, of course, 'low-budget' refers to a sum of money perhaps ten or twenty times greater than that used to finance some of the films discussed later in this article). As a result of this, Ridley Scott was offered *Alien*. This seems to be becoming a regular route into big picture direction in this country, Alan Parker being the other obvious example, though one is not very happy with the idea of independent picture-making acting solely as a step up the ladder to 'real' film-making. *Alien* itself has already been over-discussed elsewhere; suffice it to say that, while Scott has invested his very traditional space crew versus monster plot with visuals of stunning grandeur, the film remains cold, its tension superficial.

If *Alien* provides high-budget grandeur, Derek Jarman's version of *The Tempest* is sumptuously low-budget. Shakespeare's play provides innumerable snares for the unwary director, the greatest of which is the problem of reconciling the masque elements of the play with a concern about the nature and responsibilities of power which is as serious as in any of Shakespeare's other major plays. Jarman, who in his earlier independent films (*Sebastiane* and *Jubilee*) has established a distinct individual style, neatly sidesteps the pitfalls and grasps the play's essentials. The manner in which he presents them is undeniably idiosyncratic, from the casting of Prospero (Heathcote Williams) as a relatively young man and the location of the film in a fire-gutted mansion to the magnificent finale, in which a group of dancing sailors plus Elisabeth Welch sing 'Stormy Weather'. But the film is also bold, imaginative and highly intelligent.

A major disappointment was provided by Ken Loach and Tony Garnett's *Black Jack*, backed by the National Film Finance Corporation, an adaptation of Leon Garfield's excellent historical novel about a young apprentice, Tolly, a giant murderer who has cheated the gallows, and the influence of their friendship on Belle, a girl who has been labelled 'mad'. This should have provided Loach and Garnett with an ideal subject, but the film lacks the narrative strength one might have expected from them, and suffers from over-soft photography. A recent letter from cameraman Chris Menges in *Time Out* blamed the latter on the fact that eighty per cent of the film had to be shot on 16 mm and blown up to 35 mm for release. It seems likely that financial restrictions were also responsible for the transplantation of the plot from London to rural Yorkshire, losing much of the almost Dickensian quality of the novel en route. The one sequence that really begins to show what the film might have been occurs towards the end, when Tolly

and Black Jack rescue Belle from the madhouse, pushing their way through crowds of inmates to get to her. *Black Jack* is still a film parents can enjoy taking the children to; it's simply a pity to see two of our best filmmakers turning out a work that is merely good when it should be magnificent.

The most controversial film of the festival was undoubtedly Alan Clarke's *Scum*. Quite apart from the issues raised by the fact that it was originally made as a television play, which was then banned for transmission by the BBC, and is reportedly more faithful to Roy Minton's script than the TV version, the film provoked strong opposition from many critics on the grounds that its story, set in a Borstal, is basically exploitative use of violence posing as social concern. (For a more complex statement of this hostile viewpoint, with which I disagree, see Jan Dawson's admirably succinct review in *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1979.) This opposition was only aggravated by the fact that *Scum* is undeniably a strong piece of film-making.

Unrelentingly violent, the film documents the rise of Carlin, a new arrival, to the position of 'Daddy', the unofficial boss of the institution. A major weakness of exposé drama is that the audience is forced to take the director's word that the facts as presented are basically correct; I am inclined to believe that in this case they are, though probably over-compressed, so that such elements as the sheer grinding monotony of life inside are not conveyed. But *Scum* does definitely succeed on one level that has received little attention: as a presentation of the unpalatable and problematical truth that in certain situations violence is less a choice than a necessity; as such, it ranks with Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs*. Carlin is not an invincible hero, nor someone driven by a lust for power, but a survivor, adopting the only really effective strategy in the situation into which he has unwillingly been thrust. Where Peckinpah shows a mild academic driven to face the inadequacies of his own liberalism, *Scum* makes the point by counterpointing Carlin with Archer, older and more intelligent than most of the inmates, whose stated aim is 'to get through my time in my own little way, causing as much trouble to the screws as possible.'

Archer serves a double function within the film: he provides some humour (a scene where he commits the ultimate defiance by painting on a wall, in two-foot high letters, the words 'I AM HAPPY'), and he shows up the futility of attempting to deal rationally with such an institution (as in a scene where he argues in vain with the matron for permission to be allowed access to the two Dostoevski novels that have been sent in to him). Much of the humour is at the expense of two-dimensional characters; but how does one deal fictionally with the preposterous attitudes that do occur in our legal and punitive systems? (I am reminded of the magistrate who told me, in a maintenance hearing, that since it was quite clear to him that nobody could survive on the income I had declared to the court, I must be concealing a further source of income.) The problem here is one of making an audience believe that the truth is true; and that seems to me a problem which the television tradition of social realist drama from which *Scum* springs is ill-equipped to handle. Discussions of the film might have been more



Above: 'Scum'. Below: Robert Smith and John Davies' 'City Farm'

productive had they bothered to examine such questions as this, and the ethical issues raised by assertions that the film might be a dangerous influence on more impressionable audiences. Both *Scum* and *The Tempest*, incidentally, were backed by Don Boyd, the latest Great White Hope of the British film industry; and he is by no means playing safe in his choice of projects.

Franc Roddam's *Quadrophenia*, which I missed at Edinburgh but finally caught up with at the Brixton Ritzy, is based on The Who's 1973 album of the same name, which is set among the mid-60s Mods and Rockers conflicts. Perhaps bearing in mind the extraordinary self-indulgence of Ken Russell's film version of *Tommy*, Roddam has taken great care to ground his film firmly in accurate reconstruction: at least one shot in the long sequence reconstructing the seafront battles at Brighton is directly based on a contemporary news photograph. But the plot that makes a good record album is not necessarily sufficient to make a good film, and

Roddam does not really overcome this problem. The primary plot concerns the growing alienation and eventual suicide of Jimmy, a young Mod, but perhaps precisely because of the film's attention to surface detail and the extent to which it looks at group activities, this is never very forcefully established: the scene in which Jimmy finally rides his scooter over a cliff proves singularly unmoving.

Roddam, like Alan Clarke and Ken Loach, is a television director by training. In the present cinematic climate, where even a team of the calibre of Loach and Garnett have only been able to set up three film productions in the last nine years, it is predictable that many directors should learn their craft in television. But this does not strike me as entirely a healthy situation: the conventions of television drama leave little scope for idiosyncrasy (and considerably less at present than in the more adventurous television climate of the 60s); ratings battles militate against the taking of risks. It is difficult to



envision television producing a Derek Jarman.

Chief among the lower budget independents at Edinburgh was Chris Petit's *Radio On*, a production jointly financed by the BFI Production Board, the National Film Finance Corporation and Wim Wenders' company Road Movies. *Radio On* is a kind of anti-thriller: a man travels from London to Bristol on hearing of his brother's death, but whether this was murder or suicide has become a meaningless issue by the time he arrives. The film's real concerns lie rather in the series of encounters made along the way—with a deserter from Northern Ireland, an Eddie Cochran fan, a German woman searching for her daughter and her ex-husband.

The form of the film clearly owes much to Wenders, particularly as several members of Wenders' regular team were involved in the production; but *Radio On* is by no means merely imitation Wenders. Petit and his cameraman, Martin Schafer, have obviously taken trouble to capture a certain specifically English quality, of 1950s artefacts and deserted seaside resorts, which juxtaposes rather curiously with the modern rock songs that form much of the soundtrack.

Petit's accomplishment could well prove to be of considerable significance, in that he has opened up this kind of montage film-making (to use Wenders' own term) into a genre which other film-makers may continue to develop. Nevertheless, the film itself is not wholly successful: the disparate encounters remain disparate rather than fusing into a more complex whole. But *Radio On* is still a great deal superior to some of Wenders' own earliest films, such as *Summer in the City* and *The Scarlet Letter*. Given that the former, at least, failed because Wenders was exploring an innovative style of narrative, which made possible and was triumphantly vindicated by such later works as *Im Lauf der Zeit*, it is not easy to say whether this should be taken as a hopeful sign or not. As *Radio On* is certainly more adventurous than most British films of comparable scale, one hopes Chris Petit finds the opportunity to demonstrate whether the same applies in his case.

I had looked forward to Noël Burch's *Correction Please, or How We Got into Pictures*, which is a lively, wittily presented 'attempt to present a few strands of reflection' on the evolution of cinema between 1900 and the coming of sound, using archive footage and staged sequences. In fact, I found the film extremely irritating because of the superficiality of many of its analyses. It is rather extraordinary to find someone who has done as much study of this area as Burch coming out with such hoary old fallacies as the 'front row of the stalls' explanation for a type of camerawork for which there were thoroughly valid technical reasons. Burch claims to favour the growth of a 'scientifically grounded, non-normative pedagogy'; in much of this film he comes over as a cinematic flat-earther.

The surprise hit at Edinburgh was Bill Forsyth's *That Sinking Feeling*, a comedy set in 'a fictitious town called Glasgow' and shot on a shoestring with members of the Glasgow Youth Theatre. A group of unemployed teenagers, fed up with life on the dole, decide to turn to crime, but their organisation of the theft of a vanload of stainless steel sinks betrays more optimism than practicality.

From this simple storyline, Forsyth and his cameraman, Michael Coulter, have produced a film which is optimistic, fast-moving and funny. Where *Quadrophenia* is realistic, *That Sinking Feeling* is real; and the difference is an important one. The wry humour of such lines as 'I was going to throw myself off the high flats, but the lifts were stuck' conveys the experience of life at the bottom of the social pile with a vividness that melodramatic suicides will never achieve.

A very different film shot under similar constraints is Robert Smith and John Davies' *City Farm*. Two brothers and their sister meet for the first time in several years. Little of note happens—they go out for a drink, go to a party, lunch at their parents' house—yet these sequences are strangely gripping. The film is interspersed with cutaways to a mysterious and at first apparently unrelated subplot. As one grasps the three main characters' relation to its events (a relation of which they are completely unaware, even though it briefly spills over into their own lives), the ordinariness of those lives acquires an unexpected irony. The superficial informality of the events in the film conceals a

tight and subtle formal structure, whereby the delicately gradual unfolding of information about the characters is linked to an almost documentary use of the film's Leicester locations. This is by no means a mundane achievement.

Both *That Sinking Feeling* and *City Farm* were made without commercial investment or state subsidy (apart from a £2,000 grant to the latter from the East Midlands Arts Association). The determination that this implies is in itself a hopeful sign, and the two films testify to the success of the efforts that have been put into film education during the last decade. (Bill Forsyth was one of the original intake of students at the National Film School; Smith and Davies are Royal College of Art graduates.) But what is even more promising is that both these films display a strong regional identity—an identity that seems much more firmly rooted than the comfortable 'Englishness' of Ealing comedies, the faithful reconstructions of *Quadrophenia*, or even the qualities captured in *Radio On*. There is hope yet that we shall disprove François Truffaut's assertion that 'British cinema' is a contradiction in terms.

EDINBURGH TELEVISION FESTIVAL

AN AUDIENCE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Edward Buscombe

Anyone who doubts that broadcasting is too important to be left to the broadcasters should have been at the 1979 Edinburgh International Television Festival. Despite an opening paper by the TV group of the Society for Education in Film and Television which sought to draw attention to the needs of the audience, discussion mostly centred on the needs of the broadcasters. 'Television in the 80s' was the theme, but the only topic which really generated any heat of steam was the question of who is going to get a piece of the action when the Fourth Channel starts up.

Clearly this is a subject which has important implications for the audience too, and to be fair some broadcasters did try to raise them. But the troops who rallied under the brave banner of independence turned out to be a motley band, in which fighters for the cause of new kinds of programmes often seemed to be outnumbered by soldiers of fortune. Perhaps the fact that the new channel had already been given the official go-ahead meant inevitably that the only thing anyone wanted to talk about was how it will differ from the other three. Certainly when Dick Hill of the Irish Television Service (RTE) wondered aloud whether we were

already spending too much on television and where this demand for more had come from, the silence was deafening. If the delegates were agreed on one thing it was that more television would mean better. The new channel was to be brought in to redress the balance of the old; as a result the old emerged unscathed.

The fact that around 90 per cent of the delegates attending worked in television was bound to mean that their concerns dominated. And the chosen form of discussion, a panel of well-known industry figures on a platform followed by a free-for-all debate among the two hundred or so participants on the floor, will always tend towards a situation in which opinions from outside the industry lack the kind of status which would get them a proper hearing. It also means that coherent argument can rarely be developed. People deliver more or less prepared statements of their position which are made without reference to the previous speaker, their remarks being in turn ignored by the next speaker anxious to move to another point entirely.

Perhaps there is little use in anyone from outside the industry complaining about this.

If Edinburgh is the kind of event which people in television find useful then who are the rest of us to say they shouldn't have it? After all the Festival is largely subsidised by the television companies. But the television industry shouldn't suppose that because the event was held therefore all the really important issues to do with broadcasting in the 80s have been adequately dealt with.

Take for example the question of independence itself. Just as in 1978 censorship was the key word, so in 1979 it was independence, and just as last time everyone was against censorship, so this time everyone was for independence. But what did the word mean? In practice, it emerged, an independent was anyone who wasn't permanently employed by either the BBC or ITV. Yet clearly the term is relative. After all, commercial television is itself 'Independent Television', which means nothing except that it isn't the BBC. So the word came to cover a spectrum all the way from the Independent Film-makers' Association, whose voice was sadly muted but who at least represent a radically different alternative from the kinds of programme currently on offer, to producers such as Kenneth Trodd.

Trodd's new company, so he informed the festival, has a deal to supply London Weekend Television with drama productions scripted by his partner Dennis Potter. Its independence consists in the fact that the programmes will be made by their company and not by LWT's drama department. But obviously its long-term relationship with LWT will depend on the latter's finding the programmes acceptable to its scheduling policies. The Trodd-Potter company can scarcely be free to make programmes that LWT doesn't want to buy, and this will mean in practice that they will have to achieve viewing figures not too dissimilar from other ITV drama productions. Doubtless they will be achieved, but this hardly sounds like a recipe for a totally new kind of programme, or for more than a very relative 'independence'.

The benefits to Trodd & Co seem of two kinds. First, a freedom from the kinds of interference they have suffered from at the BBC, making for a happier working atmosphere. Secondly, they stand to retain more of the profits accruing from their work. One of the more surprising spectacles of the festival was the sight of the well-known socialist Trodd standing up and detailing his company's achievements in getting into radio stations and spin-off deals. The new breed of worker-capitalists who are gearing themselves up for a killing can no doubt argue that in our present economic system they can scarcely be blamed if they try to secure a greater part of the wealth which their labour produces. Was it not Alan Sapper himself who announced that he is running a capitalist union? But Trodd cannot really expect the audience, for whom these programmes are produced, to be wildly excited when what they will be getting is substantially the same kind of programmes as they are getting now, with the only difference that the production team will have more fun making them and earn more money.

That the programmes will be pretty much the same appears likely not only because they will have to be sold to the people who are running the existing channels, but also because they will be going out on a network controlled by the IBA. One of the most publicised dissatisfactions of the Trodd-

Potter partnership with the BBC has been over the political and/or sexual content of their material. What does not seem at all clear is how they will be freer to use naughty words on ITV.

These problems, of the need to achieve respectable ratings and of restrictions on content, will continue to exist on the Fourth Channel. Any television service financed by advertising revenue, as the new channel is to be, cannot for long resist the pull towards maximising audiences. Indeed one of the more frighteningly plausible scenarios that might be envisaged for the Fourth Channel is a brief period of eighteen months or so in which those who wish to produce radically new kinds of programme are given their heads. After this short honeymoon, in which the ratings, it can safely be predicted, will be derisorily low by the standards of the other three channels, the pressures to let in those producers who can be relied on to deliver the mass audience, such as the present ITV contractors, will appear irresistible.

And since Channel Four is to be run under the control of the IBA, which is charged by Act of Parliament to ensure that programmes observe 'due impartiality', do not offend against 'good taste or decency' and so on, it is difficult to see how television is to be freer of the restraints under which broadcasters currently chafe. One of the things which did emerge with clarity at Edinburgh was that the new channel will be as effectively policed as the others. Contrary to some of the claims advanced during the week, the proponents of the Open Broadcasting Authority have not in fact won the argument. The fundamental, and novel, idea behind the OBA as set out in the Annan Report was that it would not exercise editorial control over the material broadcast on its channel. Instead it would merely act as a publisher, facilitating the expression of a wide spectrum of views for which accountability would reside not in a central authority but in the programme makers themselves. But this is not to be the policy of the Fourth Channel, since the IBA is to be as responsible for its content as it is for the present ITV service.

That some of the spirit behind the idea of the OBA lives on after the proposal has been killed off by the Conservative Government was shown in a lecture delivered by John Birt, controller of features and current affairs at LWT. Birt argued that television was not meeting the needs of many potential audiences. It was failing to give adequate space to the viewpoints and life-styles of young people in general, of blacks and other minorities and of many radical groupings. His plea was that television ought to cover a wider spectrum and that it should more nearly approximate to the condition of the press. Instead of central control being vested in the twin authorities of the BBC and IBA there should be programmes which advanced the variety of viewpoints to be found in British newspapers, journals and periodicals. (Though it was perhaps revealing that his notion of a left-wing programme would be a television equivalent of the *New Statesman*.)

Birt's justification for this was a restatement of the classic John Stuart Mill position on liberty: that only in letting all voices be heard in the free marketplace of ideas could the truth emerge. Such an argument made a powerful appeal to the innate liberalism of the majority of broadcasters present. What

unfortunately it didn't engage with was the problem that the free marketplace of ideas is a very different thing from the free marketplace. Mill at least had the courage of his convictions; being a laissez-faire economist of a type extreme enough to frighten even Sir Keith Joseph, he believed that enlightenment would follow from intellectual decontrol as prosperity would from an economic free-for-all. But in an age of multi-national media conglomerates, it must be clear even to the most naive that simply to deliver up the airwaves to anyone who wants to produce a programme will result not in the blooming of a thousand flowers but in the growth of a small number of vigorous weeds. In no time at all television would be dominated not by the *New Statesman* but by Warner Communications Inc.

Which brings us to the paradox which few at Edinburgh wanted to face: that in order to have freedom there must be controls. Too many of the professionals seemed to want freedom at any price, without being prepared to admit that such freedom would include the opportunity for some people to make a great deal of money. And why not, the free-marketeers will reply, if they make programmes that a lot of people want to watch? But the argument is not against making very popular programmes; it is against making nothing but very popular programmes.

Independence of course can never be absolute, only relative to the forces which currently dominate. What was lacking at Edinburgh was an analysis of the two forces currently vying with each other for control of our broadcasting: the apparently liberal but in fact paternalist tradition of 'public service' broadcasting, now looking rather tattered at the edges from the increasing assaults of commercialism; and the advocates of 'free enterprise'. One can see easily enough how professional broadcasters, subject every day to intense and direct pressures, come to define independence in terms of their own personal liberation from one or the other. The problem for those of us in the audience is that broadcasters seem unable to produce out of this experience an analysis which would suggest a third possibility dictating neither the consensus imposed by the 'liberal' establishment nor by the market, but instead a system of control which would ensure access for those at present excluded.

The Edinburgh Television Festival as now organised does not permit a reasoned case to be made for this. It operates largely as a forum for the so-called creative grades in television to argue with those in authority over them for more freedom to make the programmes they want to make. One of the implications of a radical restructuring of broadcasting would indeed be its deprofessionalisation—perhaps a suggestion which such a gathering, whatever its genuflections towards 'access', would find unthinkable.

The audience is of course, unlike the professionals, unorganised, with the exception of Mrs Whitehouse's battalion. Not until it is will the professionals accord it any more attention than the ratings dictate. Perhaps the first step towards making some of its voices heard would be the organisation of another kind of event in which access, responsibility and accountability might displace independence from the agenda. ■

In films as diverse, within the mainstream, as *Fedora* and *Providence*, *The Left-Handed Woman* and *Days of Heaven*, film-makers continue to portray, reflect on, interrogate or half-reject the process of film-making as fiction-making, the assemblage and composition of countless variables (or countable, e.g. dollars) into some kind of narrative, deriving in its main features from literary and theatrical forms and, in effect, mainly from the novel, traditionally a key source of actual film stories as well as of modes.

On a smaller scale, the novel has mirrored this process by attempting to deal with the film world directly. Like its related and more 'respectable' genre, the 'Campus' novel, the 'Hollywood' novel has been predominantly American, even if its authors have sometimes been English or still more foreign (Pirandello's *Si Gira*; Moravia's *Il Disprezzo*). Whereas American literary critics tend to see the genre as specific to Southern California, an English reader can assimilate a wider range of material, provided there is some link with Hollywood life-style or values or work-methods—rather as American film critics regard British films as American if they find it convenient to do so (e.g. both Hitchcock's and Losey's). To take an obvious instance, Christopher Isherwood's later career in Hollywood, already well established when he published *Prater Violet* (1945), makes that little novel seem like a 'Hollywood' one, even though it is set in England in the 1930s and has nothing of the very Southern Californian particularity of the final section of *Down There on a Visit* (1962), for instance. But it is about making a musical and the central character is an Austrian director—which in itself is almost enough justification for thinking of it as a 'Hollywood' novel. Where would Hollywood have been without its Austrian and German directors, especially in the 30s and 40s, when the Hollywood Novel was really developing as a minor genre?

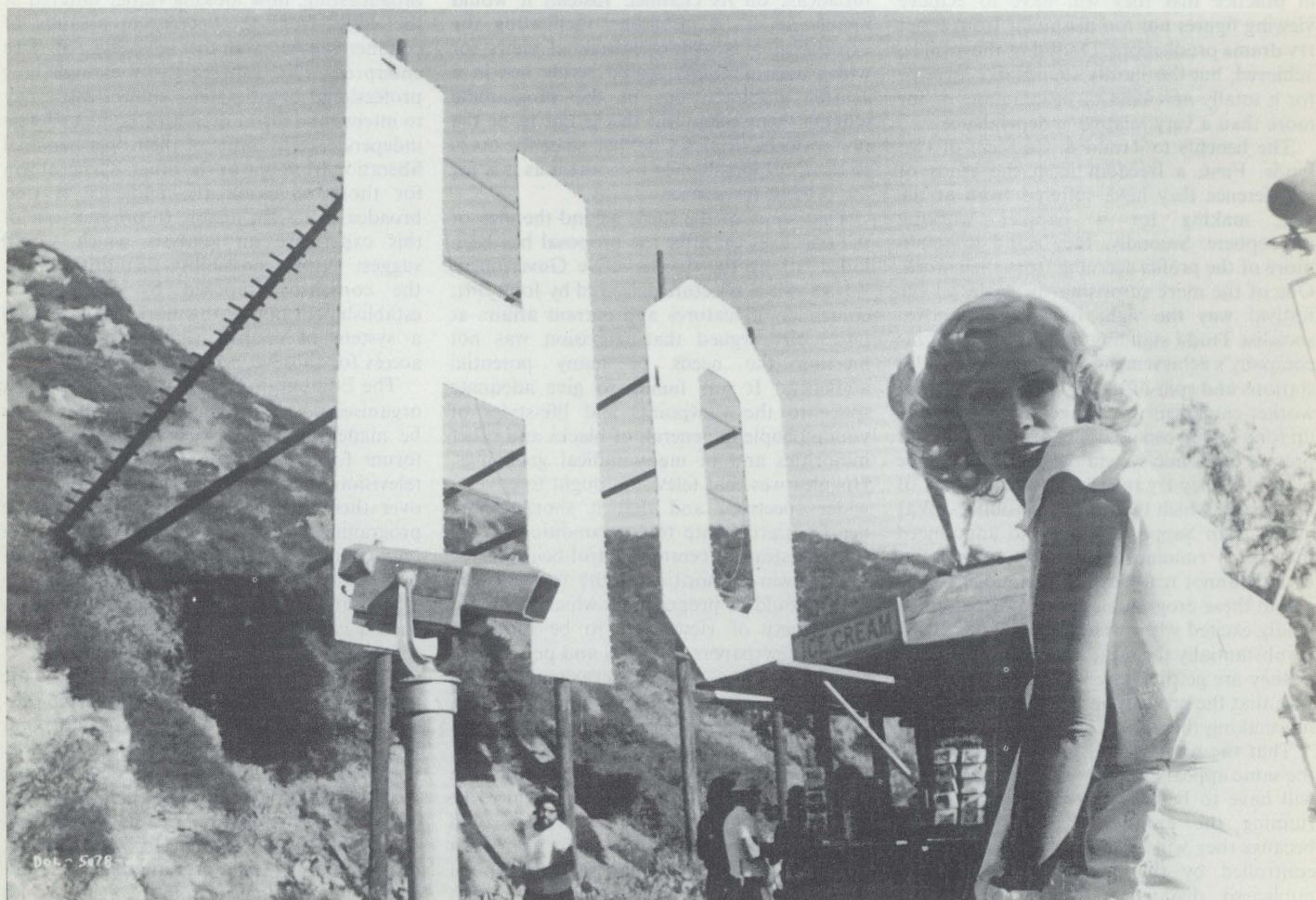
That 'Hollywood' and that genre are both essentially played out now, I think, though films about film-making (or television about television-making) may well still have an indefinitely open future. Alison Lurie's taste for witty parody has led her naturally to such dying genres as the Campus novel and the Hollywood novel—thus making it difficult for her to continue her career as a novelist, as she brilliantly destroys the forms that she uses (science fiction survived her impact, but she could not now write another *Imaginary Friends*). Her Hollywood novel, *The Nowhere City* (1965), marks fairly decisively the end of a genre of which the previous peaks were Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941), followed by Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* (1948) and Norman Mailer's *The Deer Park* (1955) ... a curious genre where the masterworks are unfinished or only

The 'Hollywood Novel— a posthumous phase

Dan Millar

CALIFORNIAN

'The Day of the Locust': Nathanael West's 1939 novel, filmed in 1974 by John Schlesinger



marginally about Hollywood or flawed by internal contradictions.

Mailer's novel is about wanting to write a novel partly other than the one on the page—hence the addenda in other books, the play version, etc. West's, the least imperfect 'classic' of the genre, keeps trying to turn words into the stasis of a painting, moments of vision, perhaps narrative painting, still photography, the ordered and limited movements of a stage act—anything but the driving narrative flow of the well-made 30s movie, which West refuses to produce out of office hours (he had at least nine credits, compared with Fitzgerald's one) except on the 'soundtrack', which is brilliantly complex and varied, including the dialogue.

So, whatever happened to the Hollywood novel? My main concern here is to establish its posthumous phase as still identifiable and worth the effort of analysing; but I shall omit Alison Lurie herself, except for occasional reference as a marker point, and well-worn examples like *Myra Breckinridge*, book or film, and I shall conclude with brief references to the 'Hollywood' film as a still viable form. It is because most Hollywood novels have been reflections of each other and of a few Hollywood or Los Angeles character-types, self-imposed limitations, that the form can die from within, ceasing to be usable for any serious purpose, including comedy.

Hollywood novelists of some quality—Gavin Lambert, Budd Schulberg, Isherwood, Aldous Huxley (marginally)—and not with John O'Hara, whose Hollywood novels, *Hope of Heaven*, *The Big Laugh*, are simply bad novels, or Harold Robbins, whose craftsmanship produces only cardboard stereotypes moving in a two-dimensional moral vacuum. Both Raphael and Harwood fail completely in their very different ways to revive the genre, and I'm not sure that Harwood sees the necessity of doing so.

Compare Harwood's book of stories with the best of Lambert's rather unsatisfactory fictions, *The Slide Area* (Hamish Hamilton, 1959; Penguin, 1963), also a collection of stories with a semi-autobiographical narrator. The similarities are there: the contrived situations, the sentimental endings, the sense of gossip close to personal experience, the touches of romantic fantasy. The differences are in the sense of place and time, the atmosphere of work actually done, the eccentric characters who fit the 'rules' of the genre by reflecting the fantasies of the screen in the fiction's 'real life'. The advantages are all on Lambert's side, and remained so to a lesser extent in *Inside Daisy Clover* (1963; Penguin, 1966), better known (undeservedly) through Robert Mulligan's film version, which does scant justice to the novel, despite some nice casting touches.

absent-mindedness, or maybe by the Mafia; another will be his next star and probably his next wife. She had been the protégée/mistress/discovery of the Head of Production, Frank King, who is displaced and possibly murdered by the ageing head of the studio, Rex, assisted by the banking Mafia and ripping off a few leaves from *The Golden Bough*. Frank's wife is burned to death when their palatial home goes up in flames; a director's wife is savagely murdered in her own house but the neighbours hear nothing; an unknown girl is found dead on the beach, possibly the victim of a 'snuff' porn-movie. The hotel-keeper, Verdugo, at whose hotel Victor stays, dies suddenly and is replaced by—the Mafia (who also help to run the Police). To sum up, it is a comedy of (American) manners, with built-in critical commentary, and a clever failure in that it is a genre-piece that gets no support or structure from the genres, literary and filmic, which it draws on for its materials, and consequently collapses back into raw material, processed only at a superficial level by the elaborate and witty use of language.

The inevitable comparison, given all the stress on the comedy of death and the classical allusions, is with *The Loved One*. Waugh found the objective correlative of his vision of Hollywood in Forest Lawn (which he renamed 'Whispering Glades'), his texture in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, his structure in the *Antigone* of Sophocles. *The Loved One* is short, simple, clear, horrifying and unerringly economical—when Waugh does not find what he needs in his main Hollywood model, *The Day of the Locust*, he simply takes a character-idea from West's earlier *Miss Lonelyhearts*, and carries on with hardly a change of gear. By this, or any, comparison (including *Look At The Harlequins*, a disastrous model for any bright young novelist, like any work of genius off-form), *California Time* fails as a novel and as a Hollywood novel. Its fatal streak of sentimentality, however cleverly disguised under layers of cynicism, is enough to ensure that; it cannot be dismissed as 'point of view' or some such technical device, since the book is all technical devices. Nabokov's comedies of human error, it is relevant to recall, may be cruel and sometimes frightening, but they are not cynical about essential human possibilities and don't need sentimentality; for instance, the treatment of the Shades' daughter in *Pale Fire* contrasts favourably with the approximate equivalents in *Miss Lonelyhearts* or in the much superior *Day of the Locust* (e.g. Homer Simpson).

GRAFFITI

The fatal Hall of Mirrors at the death-haunted conclusion of *The Lady From Shanghai* (1946/48) aptly sums up the impasse that the Hollywood novel was to reach some twenty years later (including the innocent and strangely immune non-American who walks away from it all). Indeed, Welles' film hardly makes sense except as a 'Hollywood' film, though Rita Hayworth, Everett Sloane, Glenn Anders, Welles himself, do not actually portray film-makers, stars, executives etc. in the 'story' (such as it is) of the movie, nor do they need to. The crooked lawyers, *femme fatale*, innocent outsider, as Hollywood types, and the making of the actual film itself, as evidenced on the screen, with its leisurely 'on location' passages (the yacht, actually Errol Flynn's; the village; the aquarium); its taut studio sequences, its parodic and symbolic elements, stand in for the missing fictional element of Hollywood characters putting together a Hollywood movie, as in *Singin' in the Rain* or *The Bad and the Beautiful* (both 1952). If Harry Cohn thought Welles was two years ahead of his time, it was a modest estimate; but this kind of effect is possible only in film or TV itself, not in a written book, or a script, since it is so largely a matter of *mise en scène*.

Raphael is a more experienced film writer than Harwood (*Darling*; for TV, *The Glittering Prizes*) and a much more ambitious novelist, at least on this occasion. He aspires half-unseriously to the mantle of late Nabokov (*Ada*, *Transparent Things*), while planning also the verbal equivalent of an early 70s art-movie (avant-garde mainstream: Bertolucci/Antonioni/Resnais filtered through Altman, Rafelson, Coppola in their uncommercial projects, i.e. flops). There are hints of the *roman à clef*, not rare in Hollywood fiction (not rare enough, anyway); but Dotty Lampard, the actress based on Julie Christie's media image, has only a pivotal role.

Possible stories are spun around her and her surrogates. One of these, maybe a high-class call-girl, is murdered, by the hero/director, Victor England, in a fit of

The decisive shift which makes the posthumous phase of the Hollywood novel viable at all is, less surprisingly than at first glance, the foregrounding of the feminine point of view. The success of Alison Lurie, final in its way, was not unprecedented and pointed to some faint future possibilities—Joan Didion; the young film star in *Daniel Martin*—as well as reinforcing one's judgment of the failure of Raphael and Harwood by pointing up the emptiness of their film-star dolls (Dotty Lampard, Mary Flowers), a convention worn down to the threads. Of the films mentioned, not really at random, in the first paragraph of this article, none foregrounds the feminine consciousness, not even Handke's *The Left-Handed Woman*, but all turn decisively on feminine reactions, on women's unpredict-

able and sometimes mysterious behaviour. In each case, the plot line depends on women's reactions to their situations, possibly the only point the four films have in common but of decisive importance.

My argument clearly leads to the conclusion that the novel, even in a despised subgenre, is ahead of the film by upwards of ten years, maybe nearer twenty. This should surprise no one who thinks of the relative social structures involved or remembers how much, in the English language more than most others (French comes second), women have contributed to the development of the novel and found it a congenial form at all levels from trash through best-seller to eternal masterpiece. I have juggled a little with the terms 'woman' and 'feminine' to keep them slightly separate while mostly overlapping. Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays* (1970) does just this, with devastating effect, while retaining the merest skeleton of the Hollywood novel. Gavin Lambert, in *Inside Daisy Clover*, attempted a young female narrator, a sort of Deanna Garland, instead of the vaguely bisexual scriptwriter/storyteller of *The Slide Area*; and his own screenplay for the film version made clear how much was lost when the viewpoint went.

Mailer's *The Deer Park* (1955) ascribes a special sort of wisdom to Marion Faye, bisexual pimp and illegitimate offspring of the low-class but rich Dorothea O'Faye and a European prince (a Prince of Darkness, we suspect): in the narrative a minor linking character, he becomes 'the secret centre of *The Deer Park*', as Richard Poirier rightly comments (Fontana Modern Masters, 1972, p. 37). Marion's Sibylline wisdom is an insight into the nothingness of life, symbolised by the desert around Desert D'Or (Palm Springs); and this theme is taken up by Joan Didion in an apparently minor but key character in *Play It As It Lays*: BZ, homosexual son of a rich woman, Carlotta, is a producer who, as his name implies, carries things through to the conclusion without necessarily starting from the right beginning.

The heroine, Maria Wyeth, is married to and then divorced from Carter Lang, BZ's current director; Carter had started by directing Maria in low-budget films, but left her behind in moving on to bigger movies and a new star (and mistress), Susannah Wood (and did—frequently). Helene, BZ's twice divorced and possibly bisexual wife, provides the evidence of mental cruelty that gets the Lang divorce swiftly through the courtroom—she may have had an affair with Carter herself. She just plays it as it lays, like Maria, but without the self-questioning—the brilliant title, combining golf, stud poker and sex, is the piece of feminine wisdom that the ambiguous BZ disastrously lacks. The location of his and Carter's film, the Nevada desert, brings his insight into nothingness to the surface and drives him to suicide. His ultimately masculine absolutism is more thorough than Maria's verbalised despair: BZ has found only emptiness in his relationships with his mother, his wife and his male pickups; Maria was born in Reno (in crude Latin, a pun for 'no-thing') and brought up in a Nevada ghost town, ironically named Silver Wells, inoculating her against the intolerable desert nothingness, which can be destructive.

Maria's other strength is her love for her mentally retarded four-year-old daughter, Kate, whom she visits too often to please Carter or the nursing home staff. Otherwise she spends her time aimlessly cruising the L.A. freeways, picking up useless driving skills and superfluous knowledge of the roads. Owing to the peculiar urban geography of Los Angeles, the freeways are the deserts within the city, the flat emptiness and isolation of metal cocoons rolling through empty though rule-marked space. After an abortion and a failed restart of her acting career, she ends up after BZ's suicide in a psychiatric clinic, paralleling her own little daughter. Her talent, if she has any, is for writing, for making sense of her crazy experience of life in the journal she starts at the clinic.

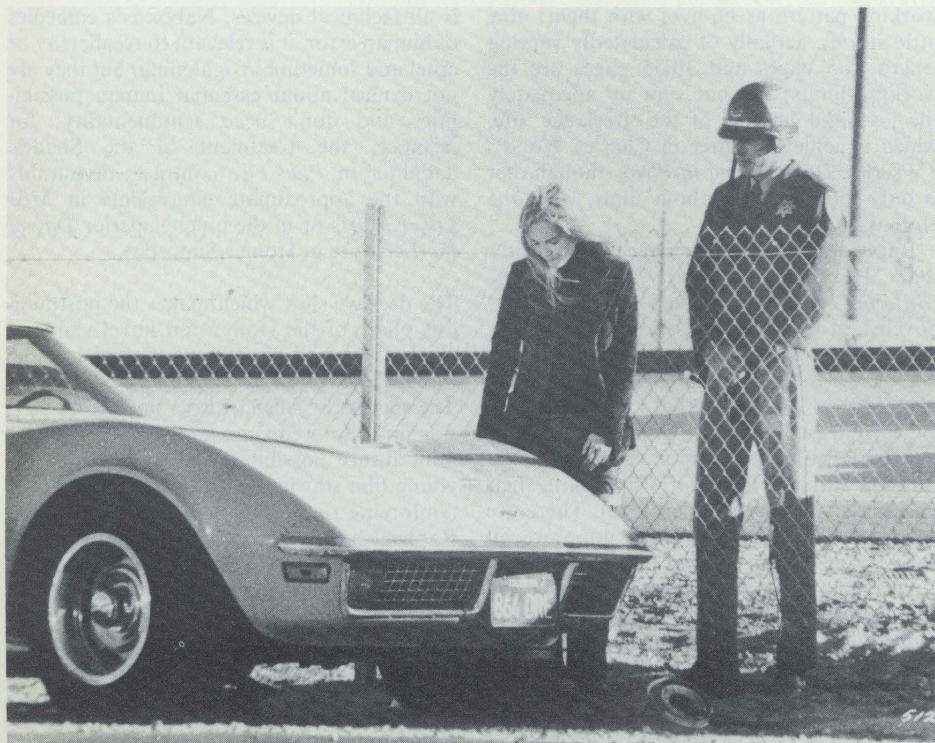
Frank Perry's film version of the novel is unreleased in the U.K. and I have not seen it. The element of self-parody, of treading a taut line between movie cliché and Hollywood-novel conventions, may possibly have been lost in translating this nervous, fleshless novel back into movie language, where ironies can be lost in pretty pictures. Robert Mulligan's film of *Inside Daisy Clover* was an unfortunate example, and altogether omitted Daisy's adult life, when she needs both her singing voice and her daughter, Myrna Clover, as she wants to make a comeback, not in the movies but as a singer. It was the death of her mad mother, The Dealer, that had precipitated the nervous breakdown which irrevocably ended her movie career. I don't want to overstress the parallels between the two novels or suggest any direct derivation, which I do not find. But they are both working broadly within the same area of a tradition, in which feminine concerns—a daughter, a performing career—have to be fought for against a male-dominated Hollywood machine.

John Fowles' *Daniel Martin* (Cape, 1977; Triad/Panther, 1979) centres on a British screenwriter, mainly of American films, who wants to become a novelist—and does not succeed. This 668-page joke wears very thin indeed; but the author of *The Collector* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (respectively a *tour de force* and a minor masterpiece) was not D. Martin and he remembers his special trick of writing from a woman's viewpoint without embarrassing effeminacy, though he pretends to have forgotten most of his other skills, apart from some good touches on the pains of adolescence. Fowles' marked hostility to women, particularly striking in the rewritten *Magus* (1977 from 1966), together with his strong romantic attraction towards them, reinforced by his distinct sympathy with aspects of feminism, must be among the complex elements contributing to this remarkable mimic gift.

Among the regrettably few successful sections of *Daniel Martin* are three which represent the first writing efforts of Jenny McNeil, a young Scottish film star in Hollywood and intermittently Martin's mistress. One of her pieces depicts an orgy involving Jenny, her co-star, Steve, and Kate, his girl-friend and Jenny's neighbour. At the end Jenny denies that it happened at all outside her imagination, but she wants Dan to have some lingering doubts about it. It seems to be 'her' invention, but may be autobiographical; in another sense, it is John Fowles writing a piece of soft-core pornography from the traditional feminine viewpoint (*Fanny Hill*, *The Story of O*).

What makes it among the best episodes in the book is not just the erotic content, which is delicately done, nor the absence of Dan's smothering narrative consciousness (he is just as annoying in the third person as in the first) but the effort to redo the traditional Hollywood orgy scene: cf. Elena and Eitel with the Bedas, *The Deer Park*; the blue movie in the ultra-respectable brothel, *The Day of the Locust*—and later the drunken party at Homer's house; vague orgiastic hints in *The Big Sleep* and *The Slide Area*; unmentionable goings-on in James M. Cain's marginally Hollywood novel, *Serenade* (1937) and rather innocuous-sounding ones in Harold Robbins' *The Carpetbaggers*.

Tuesday Weld as Maria Wyeth in the film version of 'Play It As It Lays'



(1961)—to redo this traditional element, post-événements de mai (American-style: Kent State, *Zabriskie Point*, the Chicago Seven, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*), post-Vietnam: a new mental state portrayed as a reversion to almost childish innocence, a sexual pastoral in Bel Air.

In *Play It As It Lays*, the orgies never quite happen or pass off into ordinary sex episodes; the suicide of BZ, with twenty or thirty Seconal tablets scattered on Maria's bed, actually replaces the orgy, a rotten-Romantic *Liebestod*. BZ needs Maria's reluctant presence for the act, since she is the only one who has sensed that he is suicidal, and why. BZ very professionally waits till the day after shooting the film is completed, before killing himself. He says, 'you and I, we know something. Because we've been out there where nothing is.' Carter and Helene, possibly lovers themselves, bursting in on the death scene, act as if they have caught BZ and Maria in *flagrante delicto*. Helene goes on blaming Maria for BZ's death; Carter's view is hardly more tolerant than Helene's, except that he takes BZ's death quite calmly and is only interested in Maria's impossibility as a wife for himself; there will be no rapprochement—this unfortunate Cassandra has to take the blame for disasters she did not even predict.

Suicide is not new in the Hollywood novel, but its assimilation with the orgy is. The Jewish producer, Schwartz, shot himself off-stage beside President Andrew Jackson's house in Tennessee at the start of *The Last Tycoon*—maybe he was the last-but-one tycoon. Tod, in *The Day of the Locust*, felt that his love for Fay Greener was suicidal in impulse, self-destructive; and Homer Simpson virtually arranged his own lynching by the premiere mob. Aimée Thanatogenos, the death-born Loved One, destroys herself with the calm of a priestess performing a rite and is incinerated in the veterinary furnace like a dead dog or goat ('Your little Aimée is wagging her tail in heaven tonight, thinking of you,' says the annual postcard that Dennis thoughtfully arranges to be sent to Mr Joyboy).

Suicide attempts are not rare (cf. Elena's threats in *The Deer Park*, sincere but almost ignored as small change of conversation); and neither are other forms of self-destruction—in the same novel, Marion Faye's practically self-imposed prison sentence and Teddy Pope, the homosexual actor, ruining his own career by openly visiting Marion in jail. There is the off-stage murder/suicide of the pseudo-Mexican actress and the doctor, her discarded husband, in Chandler's *The Little Sister* (1949); Paul Bogart's film version, *Marlowe* (1969), brings this spectacularly on-stage by making the actress (Rita Moreno) a very classy stripper instead, shot at the climax of her act by the doctor ex-husband—doctors in Chandler's novels and their film versions are notably untroubled by the Hippocratic Oath. The mid-western *Little Sister* (Sharon Farrell) sells out her murderous brother to his death, as in the novel, and only the film-star sister (Gayle Hunnicutt) is an innocent in an evil world.

Daisy Clover, book-version, actually makes an abortive suicide attempt only hours before her successful comeback as a singer in Atlantic City, i.e. the opposite end from the misnamed *Pacific* coast of the movie world.



'Inside Daisy Clover': Natalie Wood as Daisy

She tries to gas herself but leaves a pot of coffee on top of the stove; its tantalising smell reminds her of her love for life—which smells better beforehand than it tastes, but must be swallowed as it comes.

An earlier novel that links illicit sex with death, though not suicide in a technical sense, is Moravia's *Il Disprezzo* (1955), retrospectively turned into a 'Hollywood on Tiber' novel by Godard's brilliant film version, *Le Mépris* (1963)—adaptation always changes the original novel itself, too; it's not just a one-way process. *A Ghost at Noon*, Angus Davidson's astutely chosen title for his translation of *Il Disprezzo* ('contempt'), points up a romantic side, almost fantasy, that Godard, with his multiple other concerns, could make no use of. Immediately after her death on the road to Rome, Emilia's spirit appears to Riccardo in the Blue Grotto at Capri, consoling him for the rifts and tensions that so suddenly broke their marriage. Alternatively, once the inconveniently real and dissatisfied wife is out of the way on the mainland, Riccardo consoles himself with a delicious dream or day-dream of Emilia as she was or should have been. Moravia sets this up, not unsympathetically, as one of Life's Little Ironies; but in the present context it might serve as a particularly pure example of Woman in the 'classic' Hollywood novel, her consciousness hidden from the reader and then snuffed out (by the sudden jolt of the producer's car).

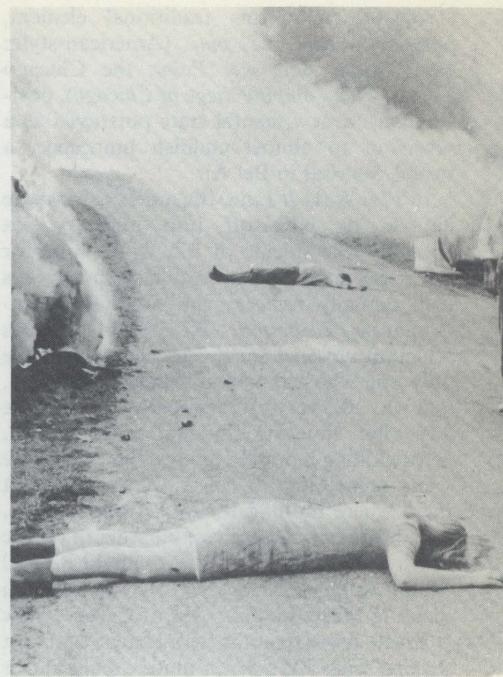
It was only in what I have called the posthumous, or post-Lurie, phase of the genre that the feminine consciousness became important—beginning, of course, with Lurie's own brilliantly witty novel but virtually ending only five years later with Didion's etiolated piece, which was already turning into a Women's Lib. novel, so unstable was the new compound. Brian Moore's *Fergus* (also 1970) had virtually nothing to do with either female sensibilities or with Hollywood, despite its setting. Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) will provide a final marker clearly outside the bounds. It may have been conceived as a sort of feminist *Myra Breckinridge* or not; it may be attacking the outmoded image of women in classic film or else just using this as a metaphor for art in general, male conscious-

ness in general. Anyway, it lies well outside the limits of the late late-Hollywood novel.

Can no more successful novels be written about film-making, then? It seems a drastic conclusion, so I'll modify it. Maybe, but not by writers (still less, critics). A talented producer/director might do it—but wouldn't he prefer to do it on film directly? Robert Aldrich came quite close, not in *The Legend of Lylah Clare*, a disaster in several dimensions, but half-accidentally in *Hustle*, where Catherine Deneuve is more a film-star than a call-girl, which seems only a metaphor for Hollywood's use of female stars, just as the love-affair is out of time and place, in which the rest of the film is so fully immersed (the dead young girl, Gloria, had been in a hard-core porn movie). Arthur Penn's *Night Moves* had some tantalising hints of comment on Hollywood and 'Art'. But the best L.A. movies of the early 70s, *The Long Goodbye* and *Chinatown*, were in a different genre altogether, not poised on the edge of one, like *Night Moves*, and were also backward-looking in different ways, though far from old-fashioned (both scripts were decidedly of the 70s in knowledge and attitudes, e.g. Towne's subtly Freudian water symbolism, Brackett's anti-heroic humour). The best L.A. movie of the late 60s was, on the contrary, aggressively up-to-date; I mean *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* (1969) but it could apply to *The Graduate* (1967), if you prefer.

What happened in the 1970s, then? In general, loss of confidence, loss of a centre, loss of basic optimism—not only in Hollywood, not only in America, not only in novelists. The New Hollywood is a bewildering amalgam of TV, independents, rock music, new expatriates... ('Awards for everything! Best Fascist dictator: Adolf Hitler.' Woody Allen took one brief look towards the end of *Annie Hall* and fled back to the comfortable security of Manhattan.) The French-based revolution in criticism has worked its way back to the English-language novelists (Angela Carter, John Fowles, among those already mentioned), making them question any genre they use. A genre which contains more trash than art is particularly questionable, especially in literary circles (whereas in film the best Westerns, say, can sit happily on top of a huge heap of rubbish—or even work their way up, e.g. the Italian Westerns of the 60s), and all the more so when its apparently referential aspect is a major one. It is bounded on one side, so to speak, by the memoirs of film people and on the other by films about film-making, some based on these very novels—I had hoped to avoid mentioning that both *The Last Tycoon* and *The Day of the Locust* have been filmed in the 70s... So it goes.

Over fifteen years ago, Professor James Light, a pioneer researcher on Nathanael West, remarked in a lecture for the British Association for American Studies that the Great Hollywood Novel would probably now never be written. His remark preceded Alison Lurie's glittering coffin-nail, perhaps by a matter of only months; but his prophetic forecast looks more convincing than ever at the end of the 70s. But the great film about film-making may still be to come; Bob Dylan's *Renaldo and Clara* wasn't it, but it kept the possibilities open for a few hours more. We should be grateful for that. ■



GODARD'S WEEKEND:

TOTEM, TABOO, AND THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

David Nicholls

With the passing of time and changing intellectual fashions, the exclusive concentration on Jean-Luc Godard's 'modernism', which informed so much critical writing about his films in the late 1960s and early 70s, appears to have died down. We have now grown accustomed to 'meta-film' and have fewer difficulties in responding to a personal, subjective cinema which is also 'film about film'. It should, therefore, be possible to take another look at where Godard's cinema was heading before the decisive 'break' of May 1968 and to view it in what is now a historical context. Godard's own absurd judgment of his pre-'68 films as 'bourgeois' or 'fascist' need not be taken seriously. All his statements and writings about film, from his early criticism onwards, have been governed by his projects of the moment, and he has expended much effort since 1968 in trying unsuccessfully to imprison his mind in a straitjacket in the name of a supposed political effectiveness which turned out to be thoroughly chimerical.

The obsession with 'modernism' made it appear for a while that 'Godardianism' was a matter of style and that anyone, provided he knew the rules and had a head full of the correct slogans, could make a 'Godardian' film. But, while some of Godard's stylistic innovations were absorbed into conventional film-making and became temporarily the clichés of 'modernist' cinema, his virtuosity and intellectual *bricolage* were always peculiarly his own. Attempts by other filmmakers to produce self-consciously Godardian films, such as Bertolucci's *Partner*, were usually disastrous—like trying to play saxophone like John Coltrane before mastering conventional music.

In fact, Godard's cinema developed naturally from his own unusually broad intellectual interests and experience and from a response to his times that made him appear as a super-sensitive seismograph recording the subterranean rumbles of a changing society and culture. This responsiveness gave

his cinema a slightly manic quality, constantly shooting off at unexpected tangents ('one should put everything in a film'), made some of his films elusive, and still makes some people reject Godard in favour of more controllable film-makers. But it also means that, now that 1968 can be seen to have been less historically important than we all thought at the time, his early films remain exhilarating experiences, even if the breadth of his experiences is unfashionable in the 'me decade' or among an intellectual left busily 'applying' Althusserian Marxism to film study without questioning the 'scientific' credentials of their mentors.

Finding one's way through Godard's pre-occupations is not easy. One feels like Hulot when he has set off a whole box of fireworks, and is tempted to retreat. Hence the necessity of isolating some themes, and possibly failing to do full justice to the film or films in question. Fortunately, Godard often helps

both audiences and critics by placing one character as the focal point of a film, acting as a prism through which his thoughts are focused. Michel Poiccard in *A Bout de Souffle*, Bruno Forestier in *Le Petit Soldat*, Angela in *Une Femme est une Femme*, Nana in *Vivre sa Vie*, Charlotte in *Une Femme Mariée*, Ferdinand in *Pierrot le Fou*, Paul in *Masculin-Féminin*, and Juliette in *Deux ou Trois Choses que je sais d'Elle*, all perform this function. Of course, to call these Godardian personages 'characters' is to misrepresent them. No Godard 'hero' or 'heroine' is separable from the actor or actress playing the part, and at the same time they are not so much people as embodiments of attitudes or ways of life. Thus *Pierrot le Fou* is not so much the story of two people called Ferdinand Griffon and Marianne Renoir as of Ferdinand/Belmondo, representing the contemplative life, and Marianne/Karina, representing the active life.

In *Weekend*, Godard's last completed film before May '68, while the 'separable themes' are immediately discernible, the 'focal personage' is not so obvious. The film is a vicious satire on western civilisation in general and Fifth Republic France in particular and a myth in reverse in which a 'civilised' couple regress (or progress) from culture to nature. Yet the focus throughout is on the woman rather than the man. From her psychoanalytic session near the beginning to her ultimate act of sacrilege at the very end, Corinne/Mireille Darc is at the centre of the film. *Weekend* is, in an important respect, an interiorised sequel to *Une Femme Mariée* and *Deux ou Trois Choses que je sais d'Elle*. Corinne's brutish husband, Roland, represents Fifth Republic Man, a repulsive ethnological specimen in whom Godard has little interest beyond establishing his crassness, and which Jean Yanne has often hammed up to perfection, most extremely in Chabrol's *Que la Bête Meure*. But it is Darc, the epitome of sexy Parisian chic and accomplished light comedienne of the 'scatty blonde' variety, who fully undergoes the journey from, as Roger Greenspun noted in a perceptive review, civilisation and its discontents to totem and taboo.



'Weekend': the couple and the car; the roads of France; the guerrillas

The enterprise of putting this sort of interiorised journey on film is fraught with the dangers of 'dime-store Freud' or the schematism of Pasolini's *Theorem*. But Godard's mind, at this time, rejected all schema. He refers to Freud's work on the origins of culture and religion rather than individual analysis, and, more important, locates his personage in a precise historical situation. Corinne is confronted not by a generalised hostile or alienating world but by a mercilessly portrayed France, with Third World revolution threatening to destroy her class and her debased civilisation. Godard trained as an ethnologist and, consciously or not, he remained one. His personages, although they may be fairly passive individuals, can only exist in active and reciprocal relationship to the society of which they are a part. Godard refers to *The Exterminating Angel*, but, unlike Buñuel, he strips the veneer off his bourgeoisie not by confining them to one room but by sending them on a stylised journey through contemporary western culture; and the angel is the bizarre truth-teller, Joseph Balsamo.

Corinne's psyche, in its relationship with contemporary culture, is the prism through which Godard's anthropological ruminations are filtered, and, after a short establishing opening scene, she relates her sexual fantasies to us. But Godard does not use his customary direct-to-camera interview technique to get his personage to reveal herself to the audience. The image is dark, Corinne and her interlocutor are almost invisible, and parts of her confession are inaudible as sombre music swells and fades. We are seeing through a glass darkly, afforded glimpses into the recesses of the modern Frenchwoman's mind. Her psychotic state—portrayed throughout the film as a tendency to fly off the handle at the slightest irritation—is hinted at by her inability to tell fact from fantasy, to remember whether her perverse tale really happened. At the same time, some elements of her story/fantasy refer forward to the guerrillas' rites (the eggs in particular and sexual degradation in general) and, incidentally, it is revealed that, as befits a true middle-class Parisienne, she smokes only

American cigarettes. Thus the plot (such as it is) is introduced casually, while the signposts to the interior journey are shown slowly, in a teasing and rather irritating manner. What is to follow is a fantasy not far removed from fact; and our civilisation, like Corinne, is unable to tell the difference.

Corinne's *Parisianité* sets her in another context. Throughout his early and middle period films Godard used Paris as a paradigm of the modern city—a dead Polis become a social and existential wasteland—while indicating that this had happened to a real city, whose *lieux privilégiés* are the traditional cafés (people in Godard's films spend a lot of time in cafés). In *Weekend* the title 'Scènes de la Vie Parisienne' indicates quarrels over cars between hyper-tense, psychotic individuals, whose main pleasure is to disappear at the weekend to their *résidences secondaires* in the country. This Parisienne leaves Paris, not for some illusory realm of freedom—a theme Godard used or hinted at in *Bande à Part*, *Alphaville* and *Pierrot le Fou*—but in order to stand as an archetype of the sicknesses of a social class and a civilisation. And, as it turns out, the road out of Paris is blocked by a monster traffic jam, in which irritable men and women try to do the things that a normal family having a day out is supposed to do—picnic and play ball.

The quarrel ending in violence and the jammed roads have neatly demonstrated Godard's disgust with his times. It remains to be seen what has happened to the supposed motor of the history of those times; so Corinne and Roland turn off the road and discover the class struggle. At the scene of the next crash the bourgeoisie, in the shape of Juliet Berto, screams out its philosophy: 'He was young, handsome, rich; that gave him right of way over everything, over the fat, over the poor, over the old...' The proletariat, a stolid farmer, wavers between resentment, deference and reason, but all ends in mutual consolation as he comforts her and they walk away arm in arm. The class struggle, like the roads of France, is blocked, and acted out as a kind of ritual slanging match.

Now, for the first time, Corinne asks

questions, and her social and psychological exposure becomes integrated into the main narrative. 'When did civilisation begin?' she asks. 'Aren't we all brothers, like Jesus said?' Corinne doesn't understand; Roland doesn't care. She puts it out of her mind, but then it hitches a lift. Joseph Balsamo's questions expose not only the crass nature of the couple's conscious desires (a Mercedes, a Saint Laurent evening dress, a fleet of Mirage IVs to wipe out the wogs, a weekend with James Bond, to be a real blonde), but also the fundamental namelessness of women:

'Tell me your name, Madame.'

'My name's Corinne Durand.'

'No, it isn't. That's your husband's name.'

'What's yours?'

'My maiden name is Corinne Vitron.'

'No, that's your father's name. What's yours?'

'What? My name...? Well, I...'

'That just shows. You see, you don't even know who you are.'

Despite the accusations of misogyny, Godard the ethnologist often prefigured the modern feminism then being revived. *Vivre sa Vie*, *Une Femme Mariée*, *Deux ou Trois choses que je sais d'Elle* and *Weekend* inhabit a different female universe from that of *Le Petit Soldat*, *Une Femme est une Femme* or *Pierrot le Fou*. In this latter group, women are fickle, flighty, opaque creatures. But in the former group Godard's viewpoint and preoccupations were astonishingly prescient of the questions soon to be raised by the women's movement.

The exterminating angel having proved his point and gone his own way, Corinne and Roland lose their own car and flounder like fish out of water. More uncomfortable facts and questions are thrown at them without response on their part. Jean-Pierre Léaud, dressed as Saint-Just, proclaims the connection between freedom and violence and the violent origins of Republican France. Our personages aren't interested. Then their attempt to regain their social standing by commandeering a Porsche from the same Léaud in modern guise ends in yet another fight and in failure.

Their next encounter really throws them. Godard evokes Brecht, and Corinne discovers she's 'not much more' than an imaginary character. Emily Bronte and the untranslatable *Gros Poucet* dissertation about pebbles that have existed longer than mankind, reminding Corinne and Roland of man's mortality, and pose impossible riddles. A version of 'poor BB' rails against these condemned bourgeois, who are only interested in cheap knowledge that they can sell at a high price, who want to be the oppressors not the oppressed, who want to be first, who will submit to anyone (Pétain? De Gaulle?) as long as he promises that they can make the laws, who are only interested in getting to Oinville, and ignore the questions posed by the natural world. Corinne and Roland, musing off screen, at last declare their ignorance of their own natures. Humanity year zero. But more revelations are necessary before a new start can be made.

The 'Action Musicale' sequence is Godard's most precise shaft at the Fifth Republic, specifically Malraux's policy of 'Action Culturelle', taking art to the masses. As Paul Gégauff rambles on about Mozart, then plays some in a farmyard on a piano decked out as an advertisement for Bechstein, the reaction is total boredom from both workers and bourgeois and, in my experience, intense irritation from the cinema audience. When Groucho told the audience that they could go out into the lobby while Chico played the piano he was joking; with Godard the joke is double-edged. Corinne and Roland, yawning broadly, are as bored with culture as are the farm workers, and the tedium of a 360 degree pan and back again appears as Godard's challenge to his audience. Aren't you bored by Mozart as well, and don't you really prefer the drum beat of the FLSO?

So far the film has been irredeemably negative, like the culture it pillories. Corinne and Roland try to get another lift. Roland sits by while Corinne is raped by a tramp. Then, in the only sequence in *Weekend* which looks forward to Godard's 'Maoist' posturings after May '68, they give the incorrect answers to a series of idiotic questions from passing motorists: 'Would you rather be fucked by Mao or Johnson?' 'Who attacked first, Israel or Egypt?' We recall that Godard was to make a film (of sorts) for the PLO.

When the pair finally do get their lift it is the turning point of the film. The soliloquies by the black and Arab workers point to both the basis of and end of the West. They are the exploited of the neo-colonial world and the super-exploited within France itself. The workers' speeches attempt to link contemporary political reality (the exploitation of the Third World and of migrant workers) with the origins of civilisation as presented in the writings of Morgan and Engels. The effect is disjointed (especially in the peculiar form of presentation), the tone hectoring and dogmatic, but they serve admirably to turn the film round the corner into the realm of myth, referring back to Corinne's analysis and the couple's brief moments of introspection, while inserting these in a wider context.

The political speeches reflect the certainty of a true and violent African revolution, and some of the more infantile fantasies of the New Left of the period (black soldiers returning from Vietnam will turn their guns

against their oppressors within the United States), while the anthropological dissertation expounds the long-outdated theories of nineteenth century thought and a mechanistic Marxism, declaring 'necessary' and universal stages in human history (a form of 'reasoning' common to Stalinism and French 'Maoism' of post-May), confusing the infancy of Marxist anthropology with a once-and-for-all given 'Theory' or knowledge. The traps are opening under Godard's feet as he attempts to conduct this type of discussion on film, with the necessary impoverishment that this entails—an impoverishment similarly to be seen in his subsequent interpretation (and not just his) of May.

Corinne and Roland are finally at Oinville, and we are now offered 'Scènes de la Vie de Province'. As if to indicate that the film is changing direction, after the brief flash forward to the guerrillas during the Arab's speech, the scene of the quarrel and the murder of Corinne's mother is intercut with titles indicating the nature of the film 'lost in the cosmos' and 'found on a scrapheap' (the scrapheap of French culture under the Fifth Republic?). The initial plot of the film thus disposed of, we are ready for the introduction of the FLSO and the beginnings of a new culture, with mankind consciously assuming the awfulness of its nature, of which Corinne and Roland have given us more than enough examples. Roland is killed off as a necessary part of the myth. Corinne passes through blankness and conventional expressions of horror to full participation.

The final section of *Weekend* is both an advance and a regression from the anthropology of Morgan/Engels—an advance into twentieth century thought, a regression to an a-social 'natural' humanity. Even the tenderness of the dying guerrilla girl's song (singled out by Robin Wood as the one moment of real human feeling in the film) echoes Rousseau's idea, in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, of *pitié* as a natural sentiment, later lost in an unequal society. The guerrillas are 'natural' in that they abandon themselves wholly to the consciousness of the present. But they also consciously identify themselves with Man, who is a pretty nasty creature. The result is a confused and violent total revolutionism. The guerrillas are simultaneously revealers of human nature (revealing more truths to Corinne) and incipient inventors of a new culture on the ruins of bourgeois society.

It may be possible, employing intellectual gymnastics of Lévi-Straussian proportions, to knit together Godard's various indications and signs into a more coherent view, but only at the cost of wrenching the film from its historical context. Godard, unlike Lévi-Strauss, is not here concerned with resolving contradictions; he is happy to leave things in movement. But perhaps one source of his anger in *Weekend* is that he cannot construct a coherent pattern. Hence, when May '68 revived the class struggle he had written off, he adhered to a too coherent, ridiculously mechanistic pattern, which involved rejecting the richness of his early cinema and anthropological and ethnological investigations. He had to go back to zero, constructing 'ideologically correct' sounds and images.

In the last sequences of *Weekend*, meanwhile, myth, psychoanalysis, the language of the French Revolution (itself a historical

myth) and the inevitable cinematic references are thrown together, resulting in two conclusions—the dreadful tiredness resulting from contemplation of human nature, and Corinne's final act of cannibalism. All this takes elements from the rest of the film, but the effort of trying to combine them blows up in Godard's face and can result in nothing but the 'end of cinema'. To overcome the horror of the bourgeoisie, says the guerrilla leader, even more horror is necessary. This revolution puts the original French Revolution in the shade, acting out proto-historical events which, according to Freud, are present in the history of each individual, and some of which are certainly present in Corinne, as we know from her earlier analysis. Thus Thermidor in *Weekend* is the killing of the primal father (Roland, as representative of the society which has spawned the guerrillas), as described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*. Further, the dead Roland is popped into the pot along with the pig and the remains of the English tourists. Cookery, the transition back from nature to culture, is performed on the body of the dead bourgeois.

Bourgeois man is cooked, but bourgeois woman joins the guerrillas. This is not 'female nature' versus 'male culture'. Roland is not torn to bits by avenging harpies but killed by his surrogate offspring and becomes (literally) the body on which the act of transition to a new culture is based. In the terms proposed by the film, Corinne's final act is profoundly subversive. She erupts into the myth in the 'wrong' place, makes her fantasies into fact, and participates with pleasure in the creation of the new culture. Of course, within months Godard, under the influence of events appropriated as instant legend, was to change these terms and become in the process far less subversive than he thought he was, producing chunks of 'theoretical practice' for a tiny coterie even smaller than the normal *art et essai* audience.

Now, eleven years after *le joli mai*, we can see what was lost. Godard's personages in the 'Dziga Vertov' films, when there were any, became ciphers in a caricatured and 'theorised' class war. At its worst, as in *Pravda*, Godard lost all ethnological and anthropological interest, and people who did not fit in the schema were considered beneath our interest. We need not listen to the car-worker in Prague because he talks like car-workers in the west. And who wants to listen to car-workers? Their revolutionary consciousness is hopelessly low.

But neither Godard nor the world stands still for long. In particular, the women's movement has made itself heard, and Godard the *bricoleur* has responded. The only product of the Grenoble video factory shown to date in this country, *Numéro Deux*, again has a woman at its centre, and, perhaps paradoxically, Godard's new method of working allows him and Anne-Marie Miéville to draw a more rounded interior and exterior portrait than ever before, even if the visual language is so radically different as to present, as yet, great difficulties for the viewer. Furthermore, Godard's career as the Louis Althusser of celluloid seems over, and Sandrine in *Numéro Deux* is viewed through a humanist Marxist anthropology which augurs well. 'Cinema is dead,' said *Weekend*. Long live the video factory! ■

In The Picture

The Subsidy Business

The Germans, of course, have a compound noun for it: *Kulturpolitik*. Like some Greek chorus, it provides the background hum to any prominent artistic event: and, where film is concerned, its meaning over the past twelve months has decisively shifted from the nebulous idealism of cultural policies to the down to earth, vote-catching practicalities of cultural politics. In the year when West Germany's celebrated Film Laws were scheduled for revision (though in fact mounting and vociferous opposition to commercialism replacing quality as the primary basis for production subsidy has repeatedly postponed ratification of the proposed new bill), film festivals have come to provide a battleground (and shop window) for the film industry's warring ideological factions. Increasingly concerned with *Politik* to the detriment of *Kultur*, they are fast becoming events at which the non-combatant goes in peril of his own *ennui*. Certainly, in Hamburg's First Festival of the Film-Makers last September, there was more drama off the screen than on it, and also more evidence of a meticulously worked scenario.

The first scenes of this particular epic took place in Munich, the production base of nearly all the better known names of the New German Cinema. Its city fathers (a majority of them representatives of the CSU) had for some time been concerned at the inappropriateness of the SPD-backed Berlin Festival providing the principal domestic market-place for the (subsidised) product of their movie-making sons. Accordingly, vague plans for the launching of a lavish Munich Film Fair (backed by the necessary million D-mark) were announced as early as two years ago. The plans ran into difficulties almost as soon as they shed any of their vagueness: none of the qualified candidates short-listed to direct the enterprise could endorse its prescribed policies.

After this first postponement, the city of Munich, the State of Bavaria, Bavarian TV (Bayerischer Rundfunk) and SPIO (the trade organisation of the old commercial industry, traditionally hostile to the New German Cinema) banded together to found, in January 1979, the 'Filmwochen GmbH' (Film Weeks Co. Ltd.), which announced that it was

appointing as director Alfred Wurm, whose only previous experience in cultural administration had been as head of Munich's Fashion Show. When an application by the Munich film-makers for 130,000 DM to organise their own event within the framework of Wurm's film fair was turned down, the battle lines hardened. The film-makers denounced Wurm for his 'glamour and glitter' policies and announced their intention of boycotting his new fashion show; and, with the trade by now questioning the wisdom of trying to launch an international film market only weeks before MIFED, the Munich Festival was officially postponed till 1980 (when, so current rumour has it, Pierre-Henri Deleau, of the Quinzaine and Paris Festival, will assume direction of a kind of Eurovision festival, with supplementary millions supplied by Paris and Rome).

Meanwhile, back in the summer of 1979, the city/state of Hamburg had got into the act. Continuing to turn a deaf ear to the pleas for funding from those locally-based film-makers (Costard, Wyborny, Nekes, Emigholz, etc.) generally equated with the German underground, its SPD-controlled administration, in as neat a piece of scene stealing as the German cinema has witnessed since *The Blue Angel*, offered the Munich directors a budget of 329,000 DM to stage their own festival on the banks of the Elbe. Officially denouncing the elitist practices of selection committees and announcing their intention of providing an eclectic showcase of recent work, the film-makers—led by Reinhard Hauff and Hark Bohm—derived considerable publicity mileage from declarations that they were going into exile—on a return ticket, as it transpired. The elitism of the Munich heavyweights requiring two special railway compartments and a private dining car for their well-photographed exodus escaped notice from all but one newspaper commentator (Hans C. Blumenberg in the Hamburg weekly, *Die Zeit*).

Once arrived in Hamburg, the Munich film-makers—flushed with self-conscious solidarity and anxious to paper over the rift with their Hamburg counterparts—made it plain that they saw their real mission as residing in the drafting of the German cinema's first collective declaration since the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962. The scheduling

itself reflected this priority, with starting times constantly delayed to accommodate extended discussions on the preceding film, and the film-makers' own discussions (most of them behind closed doors when not live on camera) making it virtually impossible for movie practitioners to view one another's work.

In this respect, the film-makers arguably had the advantage over their audience. Apart from Kluge's newest, mosaic masterpiece *Die Patriotin*, the miscellany of recent work was predictably marked by TV dramaturgy and opportunist social conscience (evidently more to the domestic taste than Fassbinder's *Third Generation*, which was stink-bombed out of the cinema). Indeed, the cumulative effect of the work presented was to create the impression of too much money and too many would-be movie-makers pursuing too few ideas. It is questionable whether it served to reinforce the wildly Utopian demands formulated, at the end of five days, under the banner of the Hamburg Declaration (and believed, like the Oberhausen tract, to have been principally drafted by Alexander Kluge).

In the name of solidarity, the new text demands equal opportunities for documentary and feature film-makers, and vastly increased subsidies for both, on a regional as well as a national level. The declaration places particular emphasis on the need for opening up subsidy monies for untried talent (30 per cent of the total allocation is the amount envisaged for debutant film-makers) and—most radical of all—demands that the film-makers should have a voice in determining which projects should be supported from public money (including TV money). It further proposes extending subsidies to distributors and exhibitors handling documentary films—omitting only the audience

from its lists of the deserving poor.

Indeed, the audience was a conspicuously absent factor in the Hamburg definitions of what, ideally, might constitute a new cinema policy of the 80s. So, after the film-makers' (and would-be film-makers')—the Utopian blueprint scarcely acknowledges any difference) rather egocentric claim to the right, autonomously, to assess their own work, it was a tonic, one month later, to attend the Hof Film Days, Germany's smallest and least subsidised festival, whose director, Heinz Badewitz, selects his programme solely on the basis of his personal taste. Not only does Badewitz manage to fill three cinemas with enthusiastic audiences (this year he premiered 38 German and foreign films). He also keeps his film-makers out of the ivory tower by having as his festival's main cultural event a town versus festival football match. This time, let the entrails be read as they may, it ended in a draw.

JAN DAWSON

Venice Festival

'Venice is not sinking,' announced a campaign in defiance of the hydrographic Cassandras. There is something about the city which proclaims survival; and sure enough, like the Campanile or the horses of San Marco, after a temporary absence (seven years) the Venice festival is back. It is, as yet, something of a patchwork reconstruction, plagued by the still lingering effects of what the president of the Biennale coyly identified as 'an interruption due to present days turmoil'. Still, there were ninety-two films; and even if some of them didn't arrive and others should have stayed at home, in the circumstances the festival's new director, Carlo Lizzani, had worked a minor miracle.

I arrived too late for the opening

'Ratataplan': Maurizio Nichetti



night film, the Taviani brothers' *Il Prato*, by all accounts a disappointment. *More* followed. Med Hondo's *West Indies Story* has the bright if ambitious idea of representing Caribbean history allegorically, as a series of *tableaux vivants* enacted on a triple-decker set of a ship which is by turns slave galley and luxury liner. Song and dance punctuate the statements of colonial history—the colonists' minuet counterpointed by the elemental rhythm of the slaves below deck—and much irony is had from the juxtaposition of authorised and revised versions of the historical truth. At its uneven best the film resembles a theatrical spectacle by a company like Le Grand Magic Circus. On the screen, though, such events tend to look constricted: the general effect here is tuppence-coloured Brecht. And while few would quarrel with the broad outlines of interpretation, credence is undermined by such historically insupportable claims as that the rise of the merchant class in Europe is directly attributable to trade with black Africa.

Paper promises crumbled. Costa-Gavras' *Clair de Femme* has Yves Montand and Romy Schneider meeting cute, romantic fiction which confirms an impression that this director has always coveted a rose-tinted viewfinder. A much touted film from Spain, Alfonso Ugnat's *Soldados*, was yet another case of Civil War baroque, rehearsing once more the expensively draped and claustrophobic torment of the Spanish bourgeoisie. Nothing from Germany. From Britain, only Tony Palmer's made-for-TV *The Space Movie*. Among a poor hand of American films, Bogdanovich's curiously unfocused *Saint Jack*, Siegel's dull, synthetic *Escape from Alcatraz* (an anthology of every prison escape movie ever made), and

the stereophonic plastic of *More American Graffiti*. The festival's motif, an animated, bespangled lion, began to look less than rampant; and the trade press, looking sheepishly for a cause, settled on a campaign to bring back the old prize lions, which at least were golden. Impatiently, everyone was waiting for Bertolucci.

La Luna attracted all shades of opinion. Bertolucci himself was not so much feted as harassed, and looked it, complaining at his press conference that the Italian critics seemed less interested in the film than in the general condition of Italian cinema—which, of course, also worried him. There is a more extended review of the film elsewhere in this issue, so I will confine myself here to a few general observations. The central problem is one of level: the cross-fertilisation of mythology and Freud, totem and taboo, spawns an unmanageable child. There is no reason why the film, like the opera to which Jill Clayburgh somewhat unpersuasively mimics, should not mix conventions; but only if it can fashion a blend which holds to its own internal logic. It is, like that last sentence, a case of mixed metaphors. The melodrama at the centre, already weighed down by its mythological pretensions, collapses when it is asked to carry the additional burdens of slapstick and self-conscious authorial reference.

Life's like that, said Bertolucci, when one Italian critic vociferously complained about the sequence which mocks the Italian Communist party. Comedy intrudes on tragedy, familial crisis can be leavened by someone falling off a ladder. Yes, but it needs a special kind of Chekhovian grace to walk that tightrope, and *La Luna* falls heavily. Allusions notwithstanding, the labyrinth leads nowhere, despite the incidental pleasures of the journey. The opening, though, with the camera

prowling round a New York apartment and the sense of impending fate almost tangible, is as good as anything Bertolucci has done.

The other major Italian film was Pontecorvo's *Ogro*, a blow-by-blow reconstruction of the assassination of Spanish premier Carrero Blanco by ETA in 1973. An Italian director obviously has to tread warily when dealing with a political killing: the applause which greeted the spectacular climax, as the victim's car is catapulted high over the Madrid streets, was distinctly uneasy. It's a dilemma of sympathy, and Pontecorvo does not really solve it with a flash forward which reveals that the only assassin not to renounce violence after the event was later killed by the police. For the rest, this is a familiar story told in a conventional way, with much tunnel-digging suspense.

An innovation at Venice was a three-day conference, somewhat loosely structured round the theme of the cinema of the 80s. Delegates included producers, directors and critics; subjects ranged from semiology to the commercial potential of video. Several languages were spoken, in more than one sense, as (unsurprisingly) the event turned into a Babel of miscommunication. A relief to turn to an almost silent film. Maurizio Nichetti's *Ratataplan* is a loose assemblage of visual gags, most of them perpetrated by Nichetti himself as a moustachioed, deadpan innocent fool who fails a job interview in a faceless corporation (asked to draw a tree as an aptitude test, he produces a multi-coloured art work—the kind of imagination the company can do without) and drifts, after a spell with a travelling theatre group, into inventing a robot copy of himself. Uneven and disorganised, this is nevertheless an engaging oddity from a man of many talents.

One sequence, in which Nichetti inadvertently concocts a miracle in Milan, is the best sustained visual comedy for many a year, Tati included.

Two films of and about Africa deserve a word. Assia Djebbar's *La Nour des Femmes*, from Algeria, is a musically structured (after Bartok) investigation into the condition of women in a society which proclaims equal rights in law but politically and culturally impedes them. Made as a kind of diary, as a Westernised woman confronts the reality of her 'liberation', it is a slow, contemplative film which eventually loses its way, and its force. Jean Rouch's *Funérailles à Bongo: le vieil Anai*, on the other hand, is deceptively measured. An exhaustive chronicle of the week-long funeral of a village ancient in Mali, Rouch's film is a model of ethnographic cinema, his observational method—close but never intrusive—conveying the reality of an event which another kind of anthropological film-making so often turns into exotic fiction. The camera does not 'explain' these ceremonies, it shares them.

DAVID WILSON

The Village in the Jungle

That Leonard Woolf played Pericles to the Aspasia of Virginia is the fancy of the latest chronicler of Bloomsbury. As if in preparation for this Attic role, Woolf spent a seven-year exile in a distant outpost of the Empire. From 1904 to 1911 he was a civil servant in the prized crown colony of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

Volume Two of Woolf's massive autobiography is a vivid record of what the country meant for the 'native of Trinity and King's'. However, it is *The Village in the Jungle* that reveals Woolf's deepest and most imaginative response to the Sri Lankan experience. Though hardly known outside the country that inspired it, *The Village in the Jungle* is a novel of great distinction. In the words of Lester James Peries, Sri Lanka's leading film-maker, who is now engaged in translating the novel into cinema: 'Woolf's is the best novel written in English about Sri Lanka. In fact, it has no parallel in English writing about Asia—Woolf got closer than any other Western writer to the heart of Asian life.'

Woolf once observed: 'The jungle and the people who lived in the Sinhalese jungle villages fascinated, almost obsessed me in Ceylon. They continued to obsess me in London, in Putney or Bloomsbury, and in Cambridge. *The Village in the Jungle* was a novel in which I tried somehow or other vicariously to live their lives.' In this Woolf is successful: he achieves a remarkably sympathetic portrayal of life in a doomed jungle settlement in the dry zone of southern Sri Lanka. There is no trace of romanticism in the book, no tendency towards 'noble savage' portraiture. *The Village* is authentic in its depiction of the realities which fashion the lives of its people—

'The Village in the Jungle': Malini Fonseka and Trelicia Abeykone



realities ranging from demonic belief to the networks of an expanding colonial economy. Perhaps the measure of this authenticity is the quick assimilation of the novel into modern Sinhala fiction; the Sinhala translation, first published in the 1940s, is no longer looked upon as a translation.

Peries is no stranger to the medium of the novel; many of his films stem from modern Sinhala fiction. But it is clear that Peries is committed to *The Village* in a very special way ('It was a kindly fate that vouchsafed the novel to me,' he said). This commitment was scarcely reflected in the casual manner he approached the project; but it could be sensed, particularly when Peries arranged for Willie Blake to photograph the film. Blake, now resident in Canada, had been Peries' cameraman on many important films since their initial collaboration on *Rekava*, Peries' path-breaking first feature.

There were other surprises to come. Peries gleefully told me one day that Arthur C. Clarke was going to be in the film. Clarke, long resident in Sri Lanka and recently appointed Chancellor of the country's technical university, had expressed a wish to play the role of the white magistrate who is conceived as a surrogate of Woolf himself in my treatment. Though rather older than my image of the character, Clarke proved in the event to be an excellent choice. He acted like a veteran.

Another surprise: the film was to be in colour, still exceptional in Sinhala cinema. I demurred. 'Don't worry,' Peries reassured me. 'It will be desaturated colour. Nothing lush or pictorial.' Here again he proved to be on the right track. Watching the first rushes (which reached us halfway through the shooting, since Fujicolor is processed in Hong Kong), I realised that Blake had delivered exactly what Peries aimed at—a texture of colour that projected the harsh, austere quality of the jungle location.

Location is a keyword—almost a fetish—with Peries. He has not shot a single film in a studio set. Embarking on a film without first going on a formal location hunt would be inconceivable to him. But *The Village* did not entail a long search. Jungle and village as painted by Woolf still survive in the country's southern extremity. Only the people are different—certainly not the disease-stricken jungle dwellers of Woolf's time.

Peries was less assured about the casting, and with good reason. The cinema is a major industry in Sri Lanka, churning out over a hundred films a year. What this means, among other things, is enormous problems in assembling a balanced cast. With a sort of predatory instinct, stars sign up for every film that comes within their reach and then have to flit from production to production. This system is wholly uncongenial to Peries, who works a great deal by instinct. He therefore toyed with the idea of employing only non-professionals. 'I wish I could do what Bresson does,' he remarks in moments of extreme exasperation. But the risks are too great. The



Patricia Adriani in 'Psyche' (more pictures pages 30-31)

Village is not a film that makes any concessions to mass taste; to present such a work through entirely new faces would be too much of a gamble, considering the finances at stake. (The film would cost a million rupees, no small amount even in inflation-ridden Sri Lanka.) So the film features the usual mixed cast of stars and semi-professionals. Except for Peries' fulminations, the system remains untouched.

On set, Peries is the image of calm composure. In the broiling heat and the dust, he is impeccably costumed in tropical finery. Taking a look at the cyclostyled script, he brackets off a section and says 'This is the shot.' He composes the shot with care, locks the instrument (a twenty-year-old Arriflex) and beckons the cameraman. With the players he often indulges a sense of humour which inclines towards the scatological.

Customarily it is a long wait between deciding on the set-up and the actual take. Natural light is uncertain, despite the promise of speckled blue skies in July-August, the height of the dry season. Though most of the shots are exteriors, artificial lighting becomes necessary. The lights—heavy, cumbersome, outmoded—are brought in. The gelatine produces a mad cacophony in the strong breeze. The electrical generator begins to chug and splutter. Mercifully, such noises will not affect the sound—there is no location recording except for a wild track taken on a battered Tandberg. (Studio dubbing is the regular practice in Sri Lanka.)

For Peries, the screenplay is primarily a rough, flexible blueprint which gives him a basic sense of structure and furnishes the main sequences. He wants space to move

about, a tendency that is eminently noticeable on the floor. Perhaps for this reason, he prefers not to develop the screenwriter's presentation into a detailed, full-scale shooting script. In the case of *The Village*, the writing did not proceed beyond the stage of a full treatment. The novel and the screenplay were nevertheless his regular reading. Each evening, he would decide the next day's scenes—a decision always contingent upon the availability of players. All else would be decided on the floor. It is the dialogue which causes delays: nobody knows the lines. Anyway, they've just been modified. Gently, Peries coaxes what he wants out of the players.

Watching Peries at work, one quickly realises that he is *auteur* in the most comprehensive sense of the word. He has a completely free hand within the constraints of the medium. There is no producer breathing down his neck. The rapport between him and Blake is extraordinary—they practically anticipate each other. The players give of their best. Last—and least—there are no serious differences with the screenwriter. What more could a director ask for?

Now in the cutting room, he supervises the rough assembly. 'I'm still not absolutely sure about the structure,' he tells me. There is a lot of violent action in *The Village*. How is he going to blend this with the gentler moods of emotional immediacy and project a total ambience which is faithful to the novel? He has doubts, and lines of tension are beginning to show on his face. Peries has reached the most creative and demanding stage in his style of film-making. He appears to be more deeply immersed in it than he was in the shooting.

A. J. GUNAWARDANA

Bódy's Psyche

The lottery of Hungarian film funding can be understood only if one accepts paradox as explanation. For instance, the cost of Jancsó's two-part *Hungarian Rhapsody* was 60 million forints, which would be enough for five ordinary films. However, Jancsó is an established director of international repute; *Hungarian Rhapsody* is his eighteenth major work. But in 1979, a 32-year-old director has already spent 30 million forints (allowing for the vagaries of official and unofficial exchange rates, about £800,000) on shooting what is virtually his first film. Although most of *Psyche* is in the can, for laboratory work and post-production costs Gábor Bódy will now have to wait for the 1980 budget.

This may not be too much of a hindrance, since the shooting is only the beginning of the creative process for Bódy. For his previous work, *American Fragment*, he shot his scenes on location near Budapest and on two indoor sets. Then he reshaped the whole film on the rostrum. All this was done in 1975-76, in the Balázs Béla Studio, a post-graduate facility for young film-makers, where experimental work is encouraged: if it fails, it can be written off. But *American Fragment* (sometimes mistranslated from the German as *American Torso*) was a success. The Hungarian critics liked it, and it won the Grand Prix at Mannheim. It is a simple story of three Hungarian officers who, after fighting their way around revolutionary Europe, enlisted in the American Civil War. Bódy did not attempt to recreate the past and then photograph it: he openly set out to fake a historical document, to construct the remains of a putative 1862 newsreel. He used editing and printing tricks to make the film flicker, to look as if it had been cranked sometimes too fast, sometimes slowly, with fade-ins, fade-outs, torn edges and breaks in the film. Bódy named his most frequently used device 'light cutting'. Instead of splicing frames directly, the screen flashes into white to stress the cut—into a negative fade-out, as it were. *American Fragment* was shown at the Edinburgh Festival in 1978. Gábor Bódy was there too, constructing video-mirrors around the builders' rubble in the half-demolished Film House, to illustrate his lecture on illusion and photogenic reality.

It took Bódy two years to get approval for a wide-screen colour spectacular as his next film. His script is based on a graceful literary hoax by Hungary's leading poet, Sándor Weöres, who invented a nineteenth century Hungarian poetess in a volume called *Psyche*, published in 1972. Weöres wrote her poems, which range from the sensuous to the bawdy; he interspersed them with extracts from fictitious letters and journals. The book also includes the works of her great love, a little-known classicist poet; a spuriously scholarly postscript with a biography of Elisabeth Maria Psyche Lónyay; and a note on her orthography. This erudite playfulness found a parallel in Bódy's

own obsession with the artifices of art.

Bódy had to invent filmic analogues for the period typefaces, the facsimiles and stylised illustrations (by a modern artist, Liviush Gyulai) which contribute to Weöres' pastiche. To raise the adventures of an 1820s Emmanuelle to the level of poetic myth, Bódy plays games with time. In the book, Psyche was born in 1795 and died in 1831; in the film, she loves her way through the age of Metternich, the revolutionary wars of 1848, the industrial revolution, and she may even survive (if Bódy decides to keep all his footage) into the 1920s.

Originally, he had wanted Maria Schneider for Psyche, but then he found a new leading lady, the Spanish actress Patricia Adriani. Her unattainable lover is played by Udo Kier; and the Silesian landowner she marries is György Cserhalmi, who was one of the officers in *American Fragment*.

Psyche is an imaginary creature, but had she lived, her nymphomania and her bawdy verses would have defied the shibboleths of her time. Bódy's film could be the first Eastern European example of 'synaesthetic cinema', to set alongside the Warhol-Morrissey works, or Caroline Schneemann's *Fuses*, as a hymn to the 'polymorphous eroticism' advocated by Gene Youngblood in *Expanded Cinema*. Bódy was not exactly inspired by Youngblood; rather he was reassured by finding such a kindred spirit, a theoretician who confirms his own cinematic aspirations. Bódy aims to free film from the over-simplifications imposed on ideas by the technology of camera, lighting and celluloid. He believes that this liberation can only be possible if the technology is used better, with more imagination and more skill.

MARI KUTTNA

Antonioni and the Two-Headed Monster

For Antonioni, *Il Mistero di Oberwald*, a TV adaptation of Cocteau's *L'Aigle à Deux Têtes*, has offered many 'firsts' with which to end the 70s (or begin the 80s, during which he hopes to be more prolific). It is the first time he has worked in Italy since he made *The Red Desert* in 1963. It is also obviously the first time he has worked with Monica Vitti since that same film. Above all, it is the first time he has worked with TV cameras, and with magnetic tape which later will have to be transferred to film.

The film for his return to film-making in Italy after the England of *Blow-Up*, the America of *Zabriskie Point*, the North Africa of *The Passenger*, not to mention the China of the documentaries, was to have been a script called *Partire o morire*. Planned first with Richard Gere in the lead and then with Giancarlo Giannini ('It was an Italian story after all, about a religious crisis, so I'd really have preferred an Italian actor'), it fell through overnight when his (Italian) producers learned that the Germans had dropped the

tax shelter scheme. 'I was offered a chance to pick the project up again after six months,' says Antonioni, 'but by then I had certain doubts about the script. Still, it is a film I want to make and one which I think will still be very topical in the 80s. But I have another Italian film I expect to make first. Yes, this time it's really set up.'

As Antonioni is usually superstitious, like most 'authors' of the cinema, about announcing projects without being sure, one must assume that this time he knows it will take off. Meanwhile, he has completed the somewhat startling film play from Cocteau's romantic piece, which was a vehicle for Edwige Feuillère and Jean Marais first on stage and then on the screen (in a film version that Antonioni doesn't hesitate to describe as 'one of the worst things Cocteau ever did for the screen'). He explains how the RAI proposal came about.

'RAI had asked me to do *La Voix Humaine* with Monica. It didn't seem right for me to put myself in posthumous competition with the Maestro. Yes, I mean it, I'm not being ironical. Rossellini really was a maestro for us all. The same applies to Monica in regard to Magnani's memory. So they asked me if there was another play I'd be interested in, maybe also by Cocteau. I thought of *L'Aigle à Deux Têtes*, not because it was a work that appealed to me particularly but because it seemed as good a vehicle as any for trying out television cameras, which for years I had wanted to do. Eight years ago, in London, I had a chance to play around with them. They'd given me a van in the streets and two cameras trained on the Home Office. I realised then what could be done with the medium. Nothing came of that particular project but I was determined, sooner or later, to try my hand at TV, in spite of the limitations that I realised could cramp one.'

Surely Cocteau isn't exactly up your street?

'The play offered me a chance for intellectual non-commitment. It's a novelettish story, this tale of an anarchist who infiltrates into the queen's castle and ends by killing her for love rather than ideology. Of course I don't care a damn about this queen and the anarchist. Somebody will perhaps enjoy reading some contemporary significance into it, connections with the Red Brigades and all that. Certainly, I enjoyed making it. However, I wasn't trying to camp it up (*Antonioni uses the word 'kitsch', which has become Italian for 'camp'*), something which doesn't come naturally to me. I've tried to be neutral. If the film becomes camp it will be because the subject matter is what it is. One can't achieve miracles with the camera if you are bound to a text like this. I don't think anybody's capable of miracles these days, not even the Almighty.'

How does Monica adapt to a romantic story like this after so many years of comedy? Can she refrain from camping it up?

'Deep inside, by nature, I feel that Monica has always had her "côté romantique". The part is very declamatory. It's theatrical. Monica comes from the theatre. I myself am not used to *scene madri*, big set speeches, in my films but in this play it's difficult to avoid them.'

The TV cameras, then, are what interested you most in this project? How different was it from what you are used to?

'Well, of course I had to take into account that the format for the two screens is different. Close-ups on television's square screen require different compositions from the cinema screen. Consequently I have often composed the image in two ways for the same scene. An example is a scene where the anarchist whips a table-cloth off a table and all the

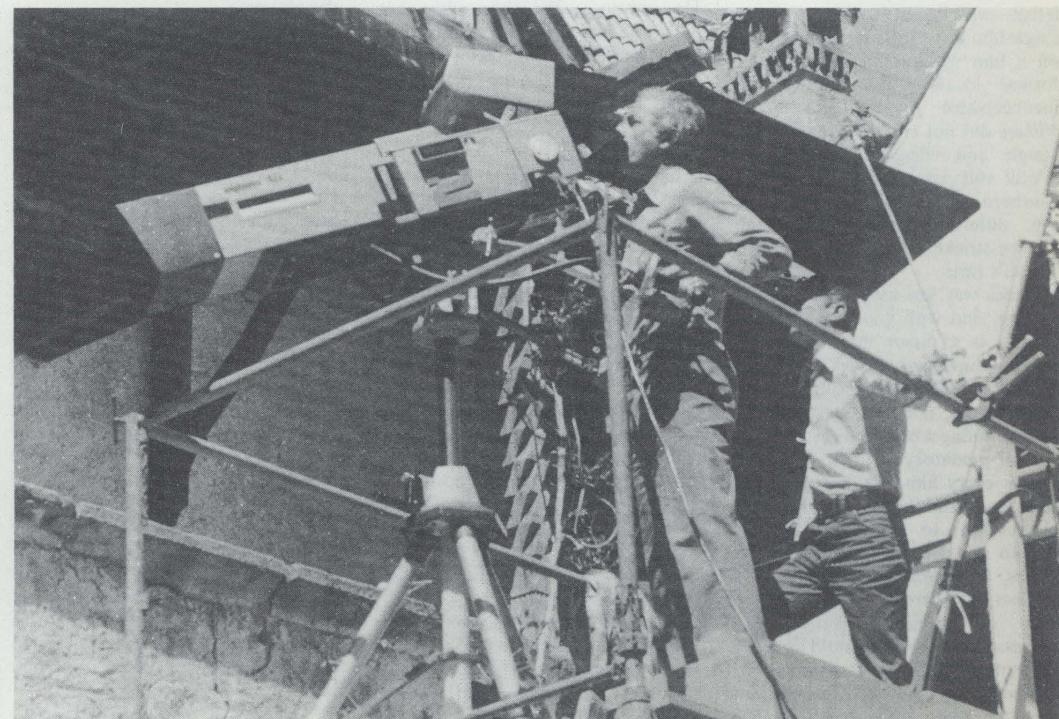
objects fall to the floor. For television I would compose the frame with the female figure in the background, the man in the centre and the objects in the foreground. For the cinema, I would have lost either the female figure or half the objects on the floor which I wanted in the shot, so I had to start the shot on the objects and pan up to take in the characters. You are limited by space, by the presence of other cameras and by the wall behind you.'

'Where the operation becomes interesting is in the use of colour. Certainly it can change everything for you, even the faces of the actors. The subtle use of different shades of light and dark is possible but it's a complicated technical process. What is fascinating about it is that you can make corrections afterwards, even violent ones, such as I have done with the opening sequence in a wood which I shot at night but which I have "corrected" to the colours of sunset.'

*The last time I saw you at work in Italy you were making *The Red Desert* and I watched you literally 'painting' the landscape near Ravenna. It's easier to get your effects now isn't it?*

'Yes, that was rather a rudimentary way to obtain the colour effect I wanted. There's considerable satisfaction in the technological advancement, with all the limitations. I regret not having been able to exploit the new techniques as fully as I would have liked, being obliged to respect a TV schedule that was not so much a question of budget as of the time available for the use of TV cameras which RAI had committed to other projects. But even without having to paint the landscape, I still like to make what I called at the time of *The Red Desert* "a violent attack on reality". The subject matter isn't realistic in this case (and Antonioni can't resist reminding me that *Red Desert* was

Antonioni shooting *'Il Mistero di Oberwald'*, his first experience with television cameras



the first film to talk about pollution in aesthetic as well as social terms) but there are still ways of using colour with violence. For example, one can take the graininess out of an image, or one can make an ambiguous character look purple.'

Are there technical problems in transferring the magnetic tape to film?

'Yes, it isn't at all easy. In Italy it's impossible. I've done tests in London and Los Angeles. I've decided to have it done in California. I'm not completely satisfied with what they can do there but I'll go over myself and personally supervise the printing.'

It'll be seen first on television?

'That's what the people at RAI say for the moment. It was made for Rete 2, the Second Channel, for whom *Padre Padrone* was made. They often change their minds on this score. I should add that I don't pretend to have resolved all the problems of the relationships between cinema and TV. Don't expect anything particularly revolutionary in terms of technique. Probably the differences between the cinema and TV, except in the case of obvious effects, will not be discernible. You will find close-ups according to TV and close-ups according to cinema. They will seem quite normal. The novelty consists only in the fact that I have shot both with electronic means and filmed in two different ways. With a script like this with so much dialogue you are anyway limited in creative visual terms. It remains a theatrical piece even if Tonino Guerra and I have tried to make it as cinematic as possible.'

JOHN FRANCIS LANE

1979: Obituary

DECEMBER '78: Chill Wills, gravel-voiced veteran of innumerable Westerns; Fay Compton, distinguished stage actress who also graced a number of films (*Tell England, Odd Man Out, Othello*); Edgar Lustgarten, lawyer turned crime series presenter, appeared in and narrated numerous 50s B-feature crime films; Alan Dent, theatre and film critic and script adapter on the Olivier Shakespearian films; Maurice de Canonge, veteran French actor and director (*Boulot Aviateur, Grisou*).

JANUARY: Vincent Korda, Hungarian-born art director, mainly on the films of his brothers Alexander and Zoltan (*The Private Life of Henry VIII, Rembrandt, The Thief of Bagdad*); Fausto Tozzi, durable Italian actor, appeared in 50s epics; Les Bowie, British special effects expert (*Star Wars*); Robertson Hare, dome-headed British comic actor (*Rookery Nook, One Wild Oat*); Paul Meurisse, French character actor, notably for Clouzot (*Les Diaboliques, La Vérité*) and Melville (*Le Deuxième Souffle, L'Armée des Ombres*); Peter Butterworth, actor who appeared in many *Carry On* films; Pete Smith, American producer-narrator of idiosyncratic one-reelers; R. J. Minney, British writer and producer (*The Wicked Lady, The Final Test*).

FEBRUARY: Leigh Jason, director, mainly of RKO 30s comedies (*The Bride Walks Out, Lady for a Night*); Louise Allbritton, elegant American actress, mainly in 40s light comedy (*Pittsburgh, The Egg and I*); William Gargan, chunky Hollywood leading man in 30s and 40s (*Rain, You Only Live Once, They Knew What They Wanted*); George Dunning, Canadian-born animator, associated with whimsical cartoons (*The Flying Man, The Apple, The Yellow Submarine*); Dolores Costello, gentle heroine of American silent films, later played the mother in *The Magnificent Ambersons*; Jane Hylton, British actress in 40s and 50s (*The Huggetts, It Started in Paradise*); Jean Renoir.

MARCH: John Robinson, British actor, television's first Professor Quatermass; Richard Beckinsale, British actor, notably in TV sit-coms *Porridge* and *Rising Damp*; Carter DeHaven Jr., American producer (*The Kremlin Letter, Ulzana's Raid*); Barbara Mullen, soft-voiced Irish actress, best known for the TV series *Dr. Finlay's Casebook*; Victor Kilian, American character actor, typecast as villains from 30s on (*Ramona, Seventh Heaven*); Louise Lagrange, French silent star; Ben Lyon, relaxed leading man of 20s and 30s, later radio star (*Hell's Angels, Hat Check Girl*); Yvonne Mitchell, actress and novelist who brought dark nervous intensity to roles in 40s and 50s (*Woman in a Dressing Gown, The Divided Heart*); Ray Ventura, French bandleader and actor in 30s films (*Quadrille*), later producer.

APRIL: Edgar Buchanan, American actor, mainly in Westerns (*Shane, Ride the High Country*); Gordon Parks Jr., American director (*Superfly*); John Carroll, leading man in RKO musicals (*Lady Be Good, Rio Rita*), later in Republic Westerns; P. J. Wolfson, American screenwriter and producer of 30s musicals (*Shall We Dance?*); Nino Rota, composer, notably for Visconti (*Rocco, The Leopard*) and Fellini (*La Dolce Vita, Amarcord, Orchestra Rehearsal*); Rosemary LaPlanche, actress in 40s RKO films; Karl Anton, prolific director during 40 years of German cinema; Jan Lustig, Czech-born scriptwriter who worked with Marc Allégret, later in Hollywood (*Young Bess, Moonfleet*); Norman Tokar, Disney director (*The Happiest Millionaire*).

MAY: Victor Saville, leading British director in the 30s (*The Good Companions, Evergreen*), later in Hollywood as producer/director; George Brent, Irish-born Hollywood leading man (*Jezebel, Dark Victory, The Painted Veil*); Jack Pulman, British screenwriter (*The Best of Enemies*) and adapter of classics for television (*War and Peace, I, Claudius*); Jan Kadar, Czech director (*A Shop on the High Street*), later in Hollywood; Georges Lampin, French actor-director, worked with Gance and Clair; Ita Rina, star of Machat's *Erotikon*; John Barry, British set designer (*Clockwork Orange, Superman*); Mary Pickford, the world's sweetheart.



Victor Saville: Yvonne Mitchell (*in 'The Divided Heart'*); John Cromwell (*in Altman's 'The Wedding'*); Jean Seberg (*'Breathless'*)

JUNE: Jack Haley Sr., American light comedian, the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*; Julian Orchard, lugubrious British comic actor, mainly on television; Dave Fleischer, American animator, brother of Max (*Gulliver's Travels, Mr. Bug Goes to Town*); Jim Hutton, lanky leading man of 50s and 60s (*Period of Adjustment, Walk Don't Run*); Darla Hood, oval-faced child actress in 'Our Gang' films; David Butler, American actor (*Desire, Seventh Heaven*) and prolific director (*Captain January, Calamity Jane*); Nicholas Ray; John Wayne.

JULY: Cornelia Otis Skinner, American actress and writer, appeared in 40s films (*The Uninvited*); Tony Galento, professional boxer who played

cameo roles (*On the Waterfront, Guys and Dolls*); Beatrix Lehmann, distinguished British actress, occasionally in films as enigmatic eccentric (*The Key, The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*); George Seaton, writer (*The Song of Bernadette*), producer and director (*The Country Girl, Airport*); Ettore Manni, Italian actor for Comencini and Antonioni, latterly in costume parts; Hope Summers, American actress (*Spencer's Mountain, Rosemary's Baby*); Frederick Stafford, Australian actor who played the lead in Hitchcock's *Topaz*; Marjorie Rhodes, British actress, usually cast as homely housewife (*Love on the Dole, The Family Way*); Michael Wilding, elegant leading man (*In Which We Serve, Spring in Park Lane, Stage Fright*); Larissa Shepitko, Russian director (*Wings, The Ascent*); Roddy McMillan, craggy Scottish actor.

AUGUST: Vivian Vance, American comedienne, stalwart of television's *The Lucy Show*; Dick Foran, American actor, singing cowboy in 30s and 40s Westerns; Richard Hearne, British comic actor, occasional film parts but mainly known as children's television's 'Mr. Pastry'; Mary Marquet, veteran French actress (*Landru, La Vie de Château*); Kurt Kaznar, Austrian-born actor (*Lili, A Farewell to Arms*).

SEPTEMBER: Felix Aylmer, veteran British actor, usually cast as wry patriarch, schoolmaster, bishop (*The Ghost of St. Michael's, Hamlet, Separate Tables*); John Cromwell, director and actor, last seen in Altman's *The Wedding (Of Human Bondage, The Prisoner of Zenda, Dead Reckoning)*; Alexei Kapler, Russian scriptwriter (*Lenin in October*); Gracie Fields, who sang her way through 30s and 40s British musicals (*Sally in Our Alley, Sing As We Go*); Jean Seberg, American actress, Preminger's *Saint Joan*, Godard's *American in Paris* in *Breathless*; Catherine Lacey, British actress, often cast as eccentric spinster (*The Lady Vanishes, Whisky Galore*); Arthur Hunnicutt, American actor, often in rustic roles (*Broken Arrow, Tobacco Road*).

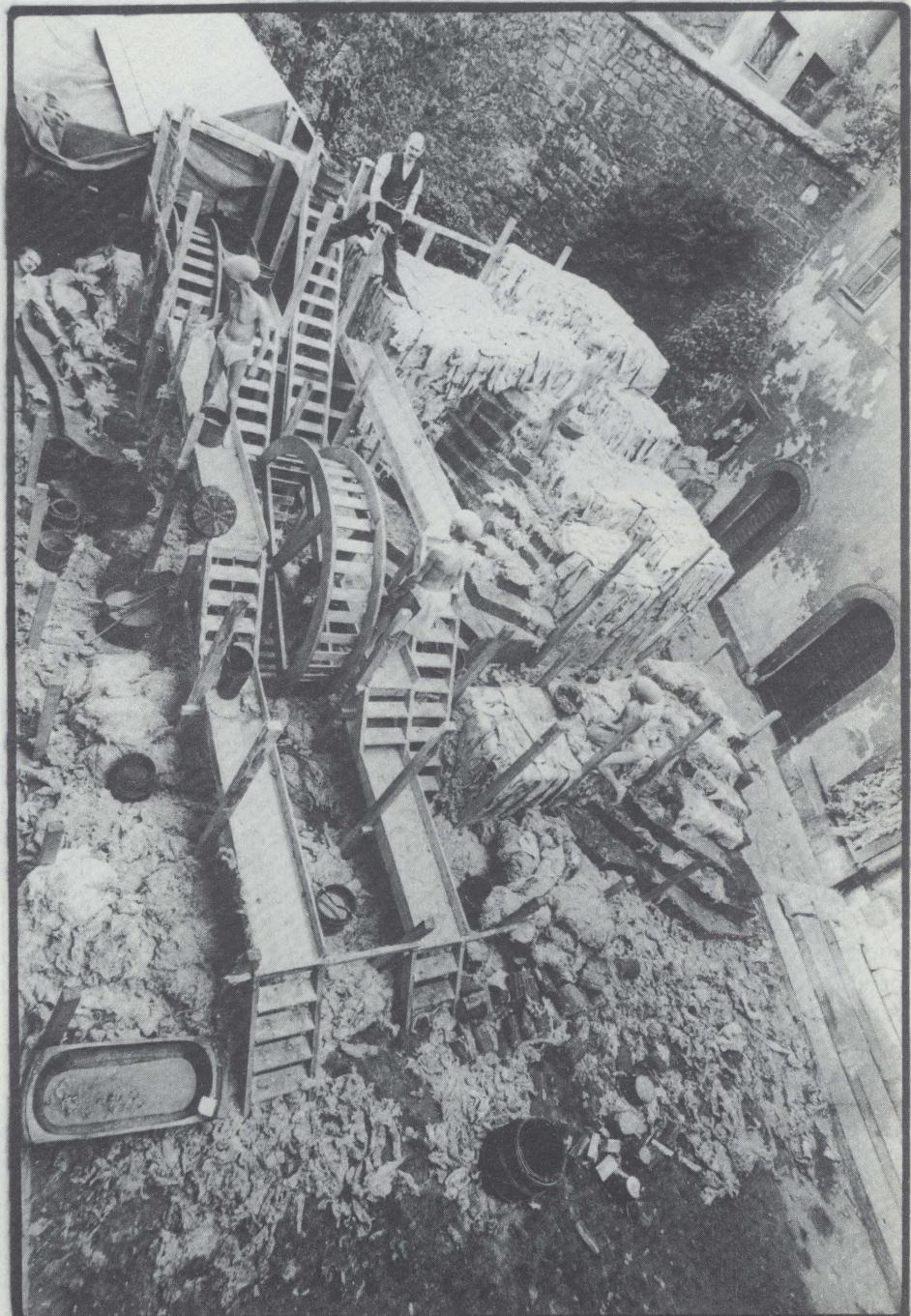
OCTOBER: Dorothy Arzner, lone woman director in 30s Hollywood (*Merrily We Go To Hell, Christopher Strong, Dance Girl Dance*); S. J. Perelman, American humorist, worked on Marx Brothers scripts; John Stuart, British leading man in 20s and 30s (*Blackmail, Hindle Wakes*), later character actor; Alexander Jacobs, British scriptwriter in Hollywood (*Point Blank, Hell in the Pacific, French Connection II*).

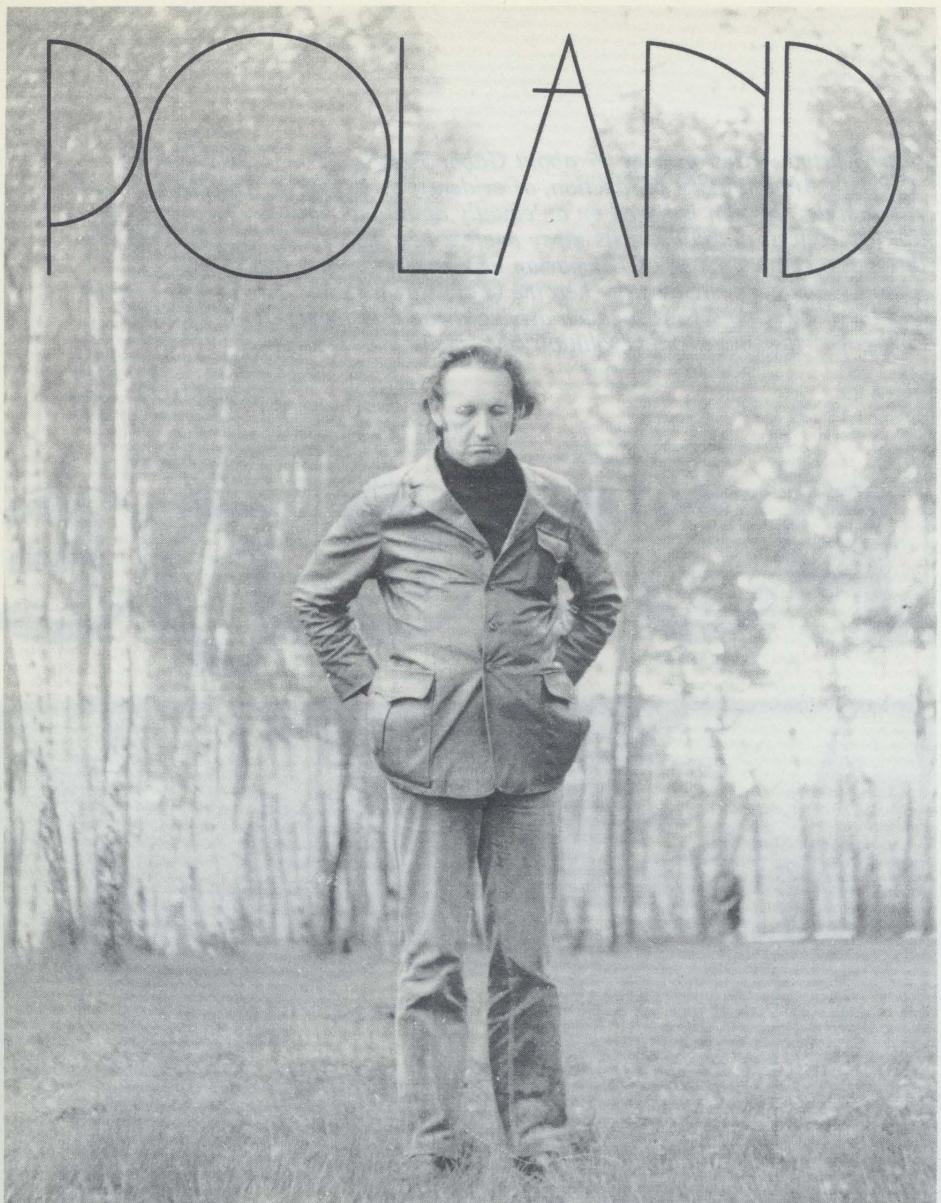
NOVEMBER: Amadeo Nazzari, popular Italian star of 40s and 50s (*Il Bandito, Le Notti di Cabiria, The Naked Maja*); Dimitri Tiomkin, Russian-born Hollywood composer (*High Noon, Red River, Rio Bravo*); Sidney Tafler, British actor, typecast as Cockney rogues (*It Always Rains on Sunday, Passport to Pimlico*); actress Merle Oberon (*Wuthering Heights, A Song to Remember*); Zeppo Marx, the Brothers' straight man; veteran director Marcel L'Herbier.



Mari Kuttna writes on page 27 about Gábor Bódy's 'Psyche'. An ambitious production, of evidently striking visual style, the film is based on an equally ambitious literary conceit and follows its gipsy poetess heroine through a century or so of Hungarian history. Left: romantic imagery. Below: the heroine (Patricia Adriani) and the poet (Udo Kier); a coach driving away in a night landscape; the 'industrial revolution' sequence

PSYCHE





Andrzej Wajda. Photograph: Tomasz Sutkowski

Peter Cowie

WAJDA REDUX

At Gdańsk, where the Sixth Annual Festival of Polish Feature Films was held last September, Andrzej Wajda was popping up everywhere: on stage before the screening of his recent film, *The Young Girls of Wilko*, at an international seminar, where he spoke of problems and achievements of the Polish cinema system, and at any number of unofficial gatherings in his capacity as chairman of the Polish Association of Film Authors. More striking than his engaging shyness is a restless energy that seems common to most of the great directors, a briskness of walk and mien enabling him to accomplish an enormous amount of work: three features in the past two years, along with production and administrative work at the 'X' Unit for which he has been responsible since 1972.

Wajda acknowledges that, with the exception of *Pilate and Others* (made for West German television in 1971), his foreign sallies have not been successful. He still likes the idea of international collaboration, however, and apropos of *Everything for Sale*, he smiles wryly: 'I was in London in January 1967. I'd spent an evening meeting David Mercer. When I got back to my hotel, Polański called to tell me about Cybulski's death. Ever since then I've regretted not having thought of

getting Mercer to do the screenplay. It was a wonderful chance, and I missed it.'

The Young Girls of Wilko was a co-production with the enterprising Les Films Molière, who had revived Wajda's reputation in Paris in recent seasons, and Christine Pascal's presence as one of the sisters may have helped the film in France. Now Wajda says that he is tempted by an offer to make a big new version of Malraux's *Espoir*, with Spanish and French participation. Before

that, though, he is staging Witkiewicz's play, *Them*, at the Théâtre des Amandiers in Nanterre, alongside Eric Rohmer's production of Kleist's *Catherine von Heilbronn*.

If so much of the best cinema has emerged from a struggle between the director and his cultural roots (Bergman and the severity of Nordic Protestantism, Fellini and the insistence of Catholic guilt), then Wajda's mastery stems from the spiritual battleground of postwar Poland. 'The real weakness of the Polish School of the 1950s,' he says now, 'and the reason for its inevitable disappearance, was that its films presented heroes who were more stupid than History. To my mind, it's wrong to stand on the side of History instead of on the side of your hero.' Certainly, in *A Generation*, *Kanal*, *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Lotna*, there is a sense of men being manipulated by historical forces; but in the recent Wajda films, the leading characters are a prey to their own nostalgia, impulsiveness or prevarication, rather than to some implacable destiny.

As Wajda says of *Man of Marble*: 'The fact that the bricklayer, Birkut, loses physically doesn't mean that his ideas are destroyed. He has to die, for death at the end is vital both to Greek drama and to Communist propaganda.' Birkut refuses to surrender to the tide of historical conformism that sweeps him from hearth, home and work. He defends his fellow-bricklayer, Witek, against a trumped-up charge and, when his estranged wife offers him the chance of monetary rehabilitation, 'security' in short, Birkut walks calmly away into the night for the last time. 'I'd hoped there would be room for one more episode,' says Wajda, 'illustrating the conflict between Birkut and his son. I actually shot it, but there was too much dialogue.' As it stands, the film suggests not merely a reconciliation between the generations, as Birkut's son puts an arm around the shoulders of Agnieszka, the film student who has traced his father's destiny, but also a union of worker and intellectual, the time-honoured alliance on which Communism has built.

In *Rough Treatment*, Jerzy Michalowski is drawn with a sympathetic eye by Wajda and his co-writer Agnieszka Holland, but the flaws in his personality are freely admitted: he entertains a naïve belief that 'justice' will prevail; he recognises the signposts in life, and knows with a vengeance how to articulate their significance to anyone who cares to listen, but he seems constitutionally unable to make the right moves. 'History' here amounts to the awesome weight of conformity in modern Poland; Jerzy rejects anaesthetic when his dentist tends it, preferring to suffer, martyr-like, than to drift through life without reacting to humiliation. For all his smugness and condescension, Jerzy is a 'hero', destroyed not so much by 'History' as by his own refusal to compromise with it. 'It's never wise to get involved in lost causes,' counsels a friend, but Jerzy positively wallows in them.

Wiktor in *The Young Girls of Wilko* knows that he could have found conventional happiness. 'Love came between my fingers,' as he terms it; and, as he revives his past on a remote country estate near Roskow, he again rejects his opportunity, provoking one of the girls, Tunia, into a suicide attempt that suddenly brings into focus the death of the

missing sister who had fallen in love with Wiktor so many years earlier. History is scarcely to blame for such procrastination, and Wiktor's weakness, joined with an acute sensitivity, renders him much more human than the two-dimensional heroes of the 'Polish School'.

Man of Marble, which recently opened in London, took almost two years to reach the West. 'Many politicians from the 50s were still around,' replies Wajda when one asks about the delay, 'and they didn't relish being criticised. That's why the export licence was withheld for so long.' The two main characters in *Man of Marble* never meet each other, except by the most delicate implication (when the young Agnieszka visits her father and recognises that only now, after the revelation of the film footage she has seen and the people she has interviewed, does she really comprehend Birkut's generation). At every stage of the film, Wajda extrapolates subtle comparisons between the 50s and the 70s. Burski, the director who has become a genial, relaxed father-figure, susceptible to the glamour of the festival circuit, is in the flashbacks disturbingly similar to Agnieszka: both resort to stratagems and duplicity to achieve their 'truth'. Birkut's speech about the persecuted Witek is deliberately drowned by the workers' committee breaking into martial song; Agnieszka's film is aborted by her TV executive's withdrawal of stock and equipment. The new town of Nova Huta may now be seen as a sham, its buildings virtually guaranteed to dehumanise the community; but when Wajda's camera glances at the beehive apartment blocks of modern Warsaw or Zakopane, or at the alien wharves and gantries of the Gdańsk shipyards in 1976, one senses that the old problems endure.

The most intriguing parallel, however, is between the two styles of film-making—the official, propagandist documentary that can either extol or denigrate its subjects, and the hectic, hand-held brilliance of Wajda's contemporary approach, betrayed by little anachronisms such as Burski arriving at Warsaw airport with a Golden Lion from Venice, when such awards were in fact discontinued some years before. The strength of *Man of Marble* derives not just from its having been made *at all* in modern Poland, but from its awareness of the dangers of judging history from a purely subjective angle. There are, in the final analysis, no villains in Wajda's film; only victims.

Like *Man of Marble*, *Rough Treatment* describes a society in which people are afraid to show their true feelings. Nobody is quite what he appears to be. Jerzy, the middle-aged journalist and intellectual figurehead, looks and sounds in the opening sequence like an intolerably complacent character, boasting about his foreign travel and uttering pompous homilies about life in general. But when his wife, Ewa, leaves him, in favour of a fiery young *arriviste*, Jerzy finds his self-confidence peeling away layer by layer, as the ramifications of his domestic crisis begin to spread like a disease, or like a conspiracy. As he becomes more likeable, so his wife and her lover seem more closely identified with a code of behaviour, both social and political, that is undermining Communist life.

Wajda etches these abhorrences with diabolical skill: the interview that Jerzy has with an advocate in a crowded, noisy Law



'The Young Girls of Wilko'

Centre where he might as well be arguing over an air ticket as over a divorce; the newspaper office where his supply of Western periodicals is mysteriously terminated; and the final courtroom scene, where Wajda's choice of camera set-up shows in the foreground the expressive hands of each new witness, while in the background Jerzy's wife is manipulated by her wily counsel. One recalls Jerzy's earlier comment to that same lawyer: 'How are you going to prove what isn't true?' 'Oh,' comes the reply, 'proof's never a problem.'

The richness of the film lies in Wajda's conviction that Jerzy is not the sole victim in the landscape. His wife clearly loves him and longs to return to his side, but she lacks Jerzy's courage (or is it foolhardiness?). Even Jacek, his wife's lover, is vulnerable beneath a superficial aggressiveness. 'Does he watch his own TV programmes too?' he asks plaintively, hiding his head in Ewa's bosom in one of the film's witty moments. And the most emblematic of all personalities in *Rough Treatment*, Krystyna Wanda's imperturbable student who shucks up casually with Jerzy, breaks her silence in the final shot of the film, the words tumbling out in a rush of guilt and anguish.

Rough Treatment is shot by Edward Kłosiński in the same hectic style as *Man of Marble*, with the hand-held camera and the telephoto lens hunting the characters with the brusqueness of a TV newsreel. Paradoxically, while this visual technique anchors the film in the contemporary world of office blocks and genuine apartments, it also heightens the absurdity of such incidents as Jerzy's attack on his rival in a quiet back street. The editing is equally abrupt, jolting the audience from one level of experience to another and reinforcing the sense of people disguising their real emotions. There is a typically brilliant cut from Jerzy waving goodbye to his family in a park after an abortive attempt at reconciliation, to a medium shot of him sitting alone, bare-chested and inebriate, behind his kitchen table.

The Young Girls of Wilko is drawn from a story by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, who also wrote *The Birch Wood*, transformed into a haunting, elegiac film by Wajda in 1970. It evokes a period and a mood dear to many Poles: that lull between the two world wars,

when the country was gradually catching up with the scientific advances of the new century, and when it was still possible for a small community to remain embalmed in the trappings of the past. Wiktor Ruben pauses one summer at the country estate of Wilko where, fifteen years earlier, on the eve of the Great War, he had enjoyed a romantic holiday. Military service on the Russian Front, and now the death of a close friend, have changed Wiktor into a gaunt, troubled individual, obsessed with death and uncertain of his role in life. But 'the young girls' of Wilko, though still enveloped in the manorial atmosphere, have altered too. One, the great flame of Wiktor's youth, is long dead; others have married; yet another, Tunia, drifts slowly, deeply into an unrequited love for the grave visitor. The lesson of this Chekhovian film is that the halcyon moments slip by without one's noticing them, and that only from the perspective of the years can one discern a balance and a logic in one's life-pattern.

The Young Girls of Wilko represents a quest for meaning, or perhaps a quest for an elusive morality. 'There must be a moral standpoint,' says Wiktor. 'The more immoral a life men practise, the more they need that moral touchstone.' The heroines of his youth in Wilko are like the facets of a prism, reflecting different types of love, feeling and disenchantment. Shot by Wajda and his cameraman (Edward Kłosiński again) in an impressionistic manner, the film is much tauter, wittier and less languorous than it would have been if produced during Wajda's early period. The images, like the dialogue, are suffused with melancholy, but the contemporary relevance of Wiktor and the 'young girls' is plain: each individual must come to recognise, at some stage, that his life has, in the words of Wiktor's uncle, 'been not much different from those of other people.' The final sequence, as Wiktor takes the ferry across the river, evinces an exquisite ambiguity. Is he returning to the sane, outside world, or is he instead consigning himself to Charon and the Styx?

In the mid-50s, some five features a year were made in Poland. Now, around 35 are completed for cinema exhibition, with the same

number again being shot for television. This phenomenon has been achieved thanks to the 'Unit' system: eight groups of film-makers, each under the guidance of a major director, with everyone having the right to switch units at three-year intervals if he wishes. It's a system that has been imitated by other Eastern European countries, and one that Wajda defends enthusiastically. 'Unit X was formed eight years ago,' he explains. 'For the first three years we concentrated on shorts for TV. These film school graduates were able to make movies exactly as they wished. Step by step they could enter the profession. I managed to save them from committing early failures, and they in their turn never tried to ape my successes. They began to inspire me, actually. The irony, and the dynamic camerawork, in *Man of Marble* sprang from my working alongside young people.'

What still distinguishes Wajda from the gifted new generation of Polish directors is his ability—or rather, his willingness—to express ideas in terms of feeling. The dialogue is important, even moving at times, but the blend of imagery and emotion is specifically Wajda's own, and a quality that allows his films to be appreciated far beyond the borders of Poland. He acknowledges this, but maintains that the younger directors in his unit are perhaps less afraid now to convey emotions in a modern idiom—at least he encourages them to do so.

Although he freely admits that records and concerts do not mean a great deal to him, Wajda has recently completed a new film, *The Conductor*, that deals intensely with the world of music, and stars none other than Sir John Gielgud, alongside Krystyna Janda, the nervy, sardonic blonde from *Man of Marble*. 'It's the story,' says Wajda, 'of a young violinist who wins a scholarship to study in New York. There she meets a great conductor of Polish birth, and they fall in love. He comes to her small home town in Poland and wants to give his Golden Jubilee concert there. But the provincial orchestra is not exactly ready for such a big occasion, and as the young girl's husband is the local conductor, there is both a private and a public conflict in the making...' The tension and the resonances of the drama are further heightened by the disclosure that the Gielgud character had conducted this very orchestra almost fifty years ago, at the outset of his career, when the first violinist was none other than the girl's mother. The theme of emotional history repeating itself, and the clash between youth and age, appear central to *The Conductor*. Just as Wajda declares himself stimulated by the proximity of young film-makers in his unit, so his celebrated conductor is inspired by his love for the girl violinist to spur his orchestra to fresh heights.

At the end of the film the old conductor dies, broken by the struggle between himself and the younger man, his rival in love and in music. Gielgud's dialogue is only partially dubbed, says Wajda, so that his splendid voice may be heard to best effect in English.

As Agnieszka Holland arrives to pick Wajda up for his next engagement, one tells them of the enthusiastic reception accorded *Ashes and Diamonds* by a packed house of students at Hunter College in New York last March. Wajda gives vent to a final bray of delight: 'God!' he exclaims, 'how talented we were in those days!'

David Robinson

POLAND'S YOUNG GENERATION

The national cinemas of Socialist Europe have achieved a good deal in their first three decades, but the achievements have not until now included any consistent programme of positive, contemporary social criticism. There have been profound attempts to analyse history; intelligent approaches to the didactic problems of the new societies; aesthetic discovery; but very few films which have pointed out current problems, areas for correction and improvement. There have been exceptions: the Czech miracle of 1966-68: rumblings in the Polish films of Skolimowski and Polanski. In Hungary, Istvan Gaal's *The Green Years* (1964) already broached the themes of *Vera's Training*. They were exceptions few enough to prove the rule.

In part the explanation is the cultural influence of the Soviet Union. Perhaps it is some special sense of politeness in the Russian character (it is found at least as far back as Chekhov's ironic short stories) that perceives criticism as a necessarily hostile and destructive activity. It often appears that for Soviet Russia criticism is a punitive machinery if it is applied from within the state, and insupportable aggression if it is offered from outside. Such mistrust of criticism lies at the root of an aesthetic doctrine like 'socialist realism'—the need to depict the world not as it is, but as it should be.

To other Socialist nations, however, criticism is temperamentally natural, positive and creative, and in very recent years it has reasserted itself strongly in the cinema. In Hungary and Poland, films of energetic social comment seem to have become a newly identifiable genre. Pál Gábor's *Vera's Training* looks to outsiders quite remarkable in the frankness and ferocity with which it

'Chance'

exposes the corruption of a Stalin era 're-education': the Hungarians themselves are inclined to regard it as quite old hat, even apart from its historical setting. In Poland the critical temper is equally pronounced, and involves a whole gifted new generation.

A leading Polish critic, Jacek Fuksiewicz, has characterised the new school in a significant article, 'Moral Concern, Public Spirit' (*Polish Perspectives*, 7/8, 1979). 'Surely what the cinema ought to do is dig deeper as literature does and also indicate the things that disturb, discern among what is in accord with moral order that which is not, and among what is the expected outcome of our action that which is incidental and unwelcome, and point to what may, if not seen in time or discounted, be sources of our weakness? The list will include, as well as familiar and diagnosed ailments which social policy is attacking, ones which are still embryonic and only glimpsed or sensed by literature and the cinema: examples of loss of moral sensibilities and bearings, of consumer attitudes developing into acquisitiveness, self-seeking and careerism, of instrumental and manipulative treatment of people, of inability to adjust to the advances in the democratisation of our life, of emergence of pseudo-élites arrogating special privileges, of hypocrisy, cynicism and opportunism...'

Many of these themes are readily recognisable as concerns of the films of Krzysztof Zanussi, the film-maker who, with Andrzej Wajda, has been the most significant influence on Poland's new generation. Wajda's *Man of Marble* and Zanussi's *Camouflage* were at first received with official suspicion, and the release of *Man of Marble* was delayed for a considerable time. Two years later, both these films and their successors would seem to enjoy free and easy



acceptance. And Wajda's *Rough Treatment* presents perhaps the most powerful statement so far on the rods society holds ever ready in pickle for the unconforming.

Zanussi is just forty; most of the new directors are younger, still in their thirties. 'Not surprisingly,' says Jacek Fuksiewicz, 'unencumbered as they were by the incubus of the war or the experiences of the early 50s, they were free to address themselves to vital questions about the cardinal values of life in a period of stabilisation. Having no alibi in the past, they can only relate the meaning of their lives, their values, goals and fulfilment, to the here and now.'

The most dramatic vindication of the new school has been the Grand Prix won by Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Camera Buff* in Moscow. Kieślowski, born in 1941, graduated from the Łódź school and made a number of shorts between 1970 and 1973, when he directed his first feature, *Pedestrian Subway*. This was followed by *Personnel* (1975) and *The Scar* (1976). In the guise of comedy, *Camera Buff* presents some searching questions which did not escape the joyous audience at Gdańsk (or, apparently, in Moscow).

The script of *Camera Buff* is a collaboration between Kieślowski and Jerzy Stuhr, a staggeringly versatile comedian and actor who seems almost indispensable to the films of the new generation (the other indispensable is Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, the cynical university lecturer in *Camouflage*). In *Camera Buff* Stuhr plays a little man who is happy in his work and his home until the day he acquires an 8 mm camera to record the first years of his new baby. Since his is the only camera in the little town, he naturally becomes official chronicler of the factory. His films win prizes in amateur contests and spur him on to new creative heights. He invites Zanussi down to the factory to lead a discussion on *Camouflage*. His success in art brings him into collision with society. In the pressures brought to bear by the factory's bureaucrats he sees, in microcosm, the evolutionary processes of censorship, destructive dogma, social rules. As a result of disapproval of his films (the management consider a *cinéma vérité* portrait of a crippled worker does discredit to the factory, even though the man is a model at his job), his boss is sacked. 'Why him? Why not me?' 'You're young. You can still be allowed mistakes.'

Alongside Kieślowski, Feliks Falk looks currently the most interesting director of the new generation. Also born in 1941, he was originally a painter but graduated from the Łódź school in 1973. He now works in affiliation with Wajda's Film Unit X. *Top Dog* (1978) was his second feature; before that he had made films for television, contributed a story to the omnibus film *Portraits from Life*, and made his feature debut with *At the Height of Summer*. *Top Dog* again has Jerzy Stuhr in the leading role, as a small-town opportunist who destroys all opposition to get the job of M.C. at the big civic ball to celebrate the town's fiftieth anniversary. Falk meticulously catalogues all the tools which are ready to hand for a thoroughly unprincipled careerist.

His most recent film, *Chance* (1979), is set in a boys' school and tells a story of fairly universal application, about the contest for the minds and lives of the young. Criticism



'Provincial Actors'

of pedagogical attitudes and obsession with competitive sport extends into much broader social significances. A new physical education teacher arrives at the school. He is a former professional coach, and at first his ambition, energy and enthusiasm are exciting and stimulating: the slovenly kick-about football team shoots up the league, and success earns the school prestige, wonderful new facilities, renewed morale. But the demands on the boys begin to seem intolerable, as they are more and more torn away from other activities and from their classes. The new teacher's enthusiasm looks like a tyrannical fanaticism. Psychotic fear spreads through the school and leads to the suicide of one of its best boys. Falk does not agree that his ending—the disillusioned teacher leaves the school, and life returns to normal—is over-optimistic, and that in any school anywhere in the world a more likely outcome would be the man's incorrigible bewilderment before the result of his actions. ('He was such a happy boy... good at games...')

Agnieszka Holland, a graduate of the Prague Film School, was assistant to Zanussi on *Illumination* and co-scripted Wajda's *Rough Treatment*. *Provincial Actors* is her third film. It is ingeniously structured (superficially recalling *L'Amour Fou*), keeping in parallel the rehearsals for a production of Wyspianski's *Labyrinth* and the private-life troubles of the actors at the little provincial theatre. Through the frustrated ambitions of the gifted leading actor, the company's wistful dreams of the theatrical world of Warsaw, and the advent of a young avant-garde director from the city who ruthlessly sacrifices the play to his own ambitions, Agnieszka Holland touches subtly on assorted aspects of careerism in a socialist environment—a basic and highly recognisable theme in the majority of the new films.

Edward Zybrowski's *Transfiguration Hospital* does not belong strictly speaking to this group of films of contemporary social criticism—it is in fact set in the early years of the German occupation of Poland—but it is full of undertones about social organisation and authoritarianism and echoes of Zanussi, not least *Camouflage*. (Zybrowski, who was born in 1935, was co-writer of several Zanussi

films, up to and including *The Structure of Crystals*.) *Transfiguration Hospital* is adapted from a novel by Stanisław Lem, the author of *Solaris*, and its action is set in a mental hospital, an enclosed society still temporarily sealed off from the encroaching terrors of the world outside. A liberal new doctor finds, however, that the hospital has its own terrors: doctors who abuse their total authority over the patients, a nurse who delights in torturing them. It is a wide-reaching metaphor of the corruption of élites.

Other directors and other films are concerned with similar themes of corruption by authority and careerism. *Clinch*, the first feature of Piotr Andrejew (born 1947), is about the effects of success on a young workman who becomes a champion boxer. In *Flying High*, Ryszard Filipski (born 1934, and a former actor) tells the story of a technocrat who, under the cover of bold slogans about productivity, effectively stifles all enterprise in his factory. *Kung Fu*, the second feature of Janusz Kijowski (born 1948), hints at the dangers if this kind of critical film became a habit rather than a mission. It is a rather complicated story of a man whose honesty stirs corrupt management (including Zapasiewicz again) first to victimise him and then, when he gets press publicity, to smother him with conciliation.

The quality of these films is in their freshness as well as their thematic concerns. Zanussi has been a stimulus but not (as Jacek Fuksiewicz might put it) an incubus. Most encouraging in the context of East European film-making is the conscious escape from the dead old rules of 'socialist realism'. As Fuksiewicz cautiously but firmly expresses it: 'There still lingers a belief, implicit more often than explicit, that films should look chiefly on the bright side. If they dip into seamier regions, they must make a point of striking a balance between the good and the bad. If this condition is not met, an impression of one-sidedness is created. But can and must every film present such a carefully weighted equation without losing dramatic fire and sliding into bland itemisation?... A film crusading for certain values has a right to be one-sided, even to the point of exasperation.'

Elizabeth Grottel Strel

RENOIR and the Popular Front



By the late 1930s, Jean Renoir had established himself as one of the major French film-makers. His artistry within the realm of commercial features was hailed internationally. His 1937 *La Grande Illusion* broke box-office records across France and was by far the most commercially successful French film that year. At the same time, Renoir had become actively involved in leftist politics. He was entrusted with the overall direction of the French Communist Party's first feature film, *La Vie est à Nous* (1936). He served on the administrative council of the C.G.T. organisation Ciné-Liberté, which between 1936 and 1938 produced a number of films by various workers' syndicates, notably those of the Railway Workers, Builders and Metal-workers. And he was one of the editors of its review, *Ciné-Liberté*.

Yet Renoir never became bound to Party or ideology. Although he worked with the Communist Party and had many friends and collaborators who were committed Party members, he himself never became a member. His sympathies lay more broadly with the Popular Front and he was always more of a fellow traveller, a humanist socialist. When he writes for the short-lived review *Ciné-Liberté*, amidst caustic pieces on censorship and rigorous discourses on trade union activities, it is to celebrate the genius of Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Much of his commitment to the left derived from an instinctive predilection for the organic bonding of a small group of *copains*, like those that appear in so many of his films and like his own team of collaborators, which at the time functioned very much as a sort of extended family. Still, Renoir's receptivity to the French Left and active involvement with it played a critical role in shaping his artistic vision at a time when he was consciously evolving his own cinematic language. The two films under discussion here, *Le Crime de M. Lange* (1935) and *La Marseillaise* (1937), can both be seen as major artistic expressions of Popular Front consciousness.

In the 30s the majority of films, French and otherwise, were stylistically patterned along the lines of what has become known as Hollywood 'découpage classique'. Cuts followed the dialogue in shot/reverse shot fashion; and although this was done very skilfully to produce 'seamless editing', the overall effect was still highly fragmented. Renoir's films were different. He put less emphasis on montage and exhibited instead a marked preference for long takes, in depth shooting with foreground and background equally clear, panning, tracking, movement within a fixed frame, all indicative of that respect for the continuity of dramatic space and time which gives his films a unique sense of organic wholeness. As André Bazin and many others have commented, the Renoir of the 30s stands out from his contemporaries through a radically different approach to film-making, at the same time that he is linked to lonely giants of the 20s, Murnau, von Stroheim, Flaherty.

But it is striking that whereas film studies have often linked evolution in narrative and thematic content to the socio-political milieu, they are less inclined to associate stylistic evolution with such a context. It is as though stylistic developments occur in a sort of vacuum, guided by some intangible and almost mystical inspiration. I would argue, however, that the cinematic language is also inextricably tied to its social context and that

Renoir's work, particularly at this period, provides us with a prime example. Jacques Brunius, in *En Marge du Cinéma Français*, points to *Le Crime de M. Lange*, without much further elaboration, as 'one of the most important' of Renoir's films. Certainly, in terms of the evolution of his cinematic language, the film is pivotal. We do, of course, have depth of field and highly fluid camera movements before, notably in *La Chienne*, *Boudou Sauvé des Eaux* and *Toni*, but in *Lange* the new style is more fully elaborated in explicit dialectical opposition to the more traditional aesthetic, thus demonstrably linking it to a pronounced ideological framework.



Le Crime de M. Lange was made in October and November of 1935 in circumstances which were indicative of significant changes that had occurred both in the French film industry and in French society as a whole. 1935 marked the financial collapse of Pathé and Gaumont, the two big conglomerates which had dominated production and distribution in France since the introduction of sound. This led to an influx of smaller production companies, less bound by tradition, and to a freer atmosphere for film-making. Renoir's whole career exhibits a tension between his personal artistic vision and the dictates of commercial interest, and

in 1935 the balance swung in favour of his own artistry. It is not without significance that the films widely regarded as his greatest masterpieces were made between 1935 and 1939.

For *Le Crime de M. Lange*, Renoir was given greater freedom than before in choosing his own collaborators. Usually, a director was assigned a standard technical team at the discretion of the producer. For this film, Renoir drew heavily upon members of a radical cultural organisation known as the October Group. The October Group was formed in 1929 on a co-operative basis with the aim of furnishing a radical alternative to the 'bourgeois' theatre of the Grands Boulevards. It also took an active interest in the cinema, a number of its members writing criticism for *La Revue du Cinéma*, the *Cahiers du Cinéma* of its day. Again, its aim was a radical alternative to commercial cinema; and with its own film *L'Affaire est dans le Sac* (1932), it provided both an early example of co-operative film-making and a satirical spoof on bourgeois habits.

The October Group was affiliated to a larger organisation known as the Fédération du Théâtre Ouvrier, which was sponsored by the French Communist Party. At political demonstrations, of which there were many, particularly after the Concorde riots of 1934, the Fédération du Théâtre Ouvrier and in particular the October Group were often

called upon for artistic presentations. During the strikes of June 1936, the October Group provided entertainment for the strikers in the form of plays, poetry readings and improvisations. The Group's chief animator was the anarcho-communist poet of the Left Bank Jacques Prévert, who was largely responsible for the script of *Lange*. As group member Jean-Paul Le Chanois put it, in an article written for *Ciné-Club* in 1949: 'We were a young team made up of those who expressed a complete devotion to Jacques Prévert because he was Jacques Prévert, our *raison d'être* and to a certain extent the director of our consciousness.' *Lange* was the only occasion on which Prévert and Renoir worked together, and Prévert's participation is critical in understanding the thematic layering and theoretical underpinnings that lie at the heart of the film.

Other members of the Group who worked on the film included set designer Jacques Castanier, assistant director Pierre Prévert, actors Sylvia Bataille, Jacques Brunius, Guy Decomble, Marcel Duhamel, Florelle, Fabien Loris, Brémiaud, Maurice Baquet, and music writer Jo Kosma. These names would reappear time and time again in the period, making up the artistic and technical teams of virtually all Renoir's and also Marcel Carné's films from 1935 to 1939. They would also figure prominently in connection with Communist Party and C.G.T. film-making, which began in earnest in 1936. All this is indicative of an interesting and unusual period of cross-fertilisation between leftist political film-making and a certain segment of French commercial cinema, that which was largely responsible for the so-called 'poetic realist' movement. Renoir's own acquaintance with the October Group stemmed from his collaboration with the Spaniard Jacques Castanier, who had furnished sets for *La Nuit du Carrefour*, *Chotard et Cie* and *Boudou Sauvé des Eaux* and who would provide the central idea for *Le Crime de M. Lange*.

Lange reflects Renoir's growing political consciousness. Even if one knew nothing of his involvement with leftist politics, this would be apparent in comparing it with the film he made just before it, *Toni* (1934). Filmed under the patronage of the independent producer/director Marcel Pagnol, *Toni* is a remarkable film, a dramatic departure from standard commercial cinema, with its heightened realism, authenticity of setting, real social types, use of non-professional players, true accents, a narrative which was a direct outgrowth of an actual police file, albeit tempered by Renoir's plastic and poetic sensibility. Yet, although it was made in 1934 and focuses on the migrant working classes, it is far from the Popular Front film that *Lange* is.

In *Toni* we are dealing exclusively with a rural milieu, characterised by its initial appearance of openness, with an emphasis on exteriors captured in long shots with a wide angle lens. But in *Toni* we find a nature that is pressing in, confining, like the massive rock surfaces of the quarry which dwarf the workers and threaten to crush them. The narrative is centred on the fatalistic ebb and flow of passion and overt social comment is oblique, occurring as a sort of parenthesis round the film, with the migrant workers returning year after year to a fated existence. *Toni* dies in the arms of a comrade; but in 1934 the prospect of a mass movement based

Lange (René Lefèvre) at the window; the caretaker (Marcel Levesque) in the courtyard





on working class solidarity was still a distant hope, and the tone of the film is overridingly pessimistic.

With *Le Crime de M. Lange*, we turn from man and nature and forces seemingly beyond his control to man and society, where he is given the possibility of seizing control of his existence. Ostensibly, everything about the film is more closed. First of all, we are dealing mainly with interiors. The narrative centres on an enclosed circular courtyard, and the film keeps returning to the courtyard as a focal point. Moreover, the very structure of the narrative presents itself as a closed circle, with the bistro setting fading out to the extended flashback that comprises the bulk of the film, only to return to the self-same bistro at the end. And on one striking occasion, the camera itself even forms a tightly closed circle in the celebrated 360 degree pan which precedes Batala's murder. Yet within the courtyard setting, as we shall see, there is a greater openness, a sense of overcoming limitations, the potential for breaking with prescribed patterns, leading to an open-endedness at the end of *Lange* which is quite the reversal of *Toni*. Circularity here then is used to signify solidarity and organic binding.

Le Crime de M. Lange is the Popular Front film *par excellence*, full of the exuberance, optimism and confidence in the ability to transform social conditions which characterised that movement. The thematic references to the Popular Front and its ideology abound. There is the bankruptcy and predictable collapse of capitalist enterprise, proletarian solidarity and the setting up of co-operative enterprise. Lange, the story-writer, dreamer, artist intellectual, and his solidarity with the working class (printers and laundresses), is representative of the artist/proletarian alliances against fascism like the Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Anti-fascistes and the Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires, which figured so prominently in the period. Indeed, one of Lange's publications has in it a marked reference to the Cagoulard movement. However, the whole alliance as initially depicted by the film is somewhat curious and less than

natural, even humorous. Valentine laughs when Lange reveals that his first name is Amedée, evocative of Mozart, grace, elegance, aristocracy. But that somewhat surprising alliance is shown to be ever feasible as the relationship between Lange and Valentine develops.

In his book on Renoir, Raymond Durgnat has pointed out that the name Lange is a clever Prévertian play on words between 'l'ange', meaning angel and thus by cultural inference divinely inspired artistic inspiration, and 'linge', meaning laundry, with its reference within the context of the film. The whole idea of the laundresses and clean linen is itself suggestive of class divisions. In the opening scene, Valentine comments that for once they will have clean sheets to sleep on, whereas the laundresses are always running into Batala's office to assure him of a clean change of clothes. In the iconography of the period, the ruling class had the luxury of clean sheets whereas the working class simply didn't. The same imagery is found in other films of the period. There is, for instance, a reference in Carné's *Quai des Brumes* (1938), where one of the down and outs who frequent Panama's bar has the exquisite pleasure of sleeping on clean sheets for the first time in his life.

The image of the working class in *Lange* is certainly romanticised and poetised, particularly in Prévert's dialogue. But then was not perhaps the Popular Front view of the working class also highly romanticised? In *Lange* there is no question of dealing with an industrialised proletariat. Indeed, an industrialised proletariat is conspicuously absent from French feature films even at a time when labour and its social struggle had come to the forefront, as in the mid-30s. On the other hand, a number of economic historians, notably David Landes and Jesse Pitts, have pointed to the dominance of French industry by the small family concern, of which the Batala publishing company has to be a prototype.

The portrait of Batala, the sleek, slippery, urbane womaniser and financial wheeler-dealer, even his violent death, is reminiscent of Stavisky and the recent Stavisky scandal.

The name Batala evokes the town in Portugal, Batalha, celebrated for its Dominican abbey; and Batala's return in the guise of a priest injects a note of traditional, leftist anti-clericalism that is pure Prévert.

A somewhat more obscure reference to the Popular Front is the tearing down of the billboard which covers up the only window in Charles' room. Fresh air, health, housing, the general quality of the working man's living and working milieu, were to become central preoccupations of the Popular Front. Léo Lagrange would head the newly created Office of Sport and Leisure Time under the Popular Front Government; the *auberges de jeunesse* would expand dramatically; the Socialist Party's Faucons Rouges youth movement would celebrate fresh air and fitness. Indeed, the most enduring contribution of the Popular Front was probably the paid holiday to the sea. Charles' graphic liberation from the dark, claustrophobic confines of his room admirably anticipates all this.

Another way in which Renoir reflected Popular Front attitudes was in his approach to women. His focus here is on working-class women, but with subtle psycho-sociological distinctions. There is the classic tart that has appeared before in Renoir's films, Batala's secretary, who uses her favours to attain upward social mobility and is willing to prostitute herself to Batala and elsewhere on his behalf. But there is also the working-class woman Valentine, resourceful, independent, mature, an active seductress, clearly a woman with a 'past' yet refusing to be exploited, who has no illusions about everlasting love with Lange. Here is chronicled a rather progressive attitude towards love, sex and marriage, certainly for French cinema of the period. But perhaps one of the more remarkable insights gained from Renoir's treatment of women in the film comes with Estelle's loss of Batala's bastard baby. This is greeted by Estelle and her comrades with gales of laughter, a reaction which can only be seen as an allusive appeal for the right to abortion.

The film's epilogue gives us still another insight into Popular Front attitudes. Here, Lange is given a trial by the people. The bistro *copains* have to decide whether or not to turn him in, and their decision to exonerate Lange and abet him in crossing the border confirms his crime as just and implicitly conveys a rather radical message. But perhaps even more revealing is the whole underlying concept of popular justice being somehow superior to institutionalised justice which was so dear to the French Left. It was an attitude similar to that which, for example, called for the abolition of all official film censorship. As Léon Moussinac, film critic for *L'Humanité*, advised, the public should exercise its own censorship by hissing or applauding films. It was an attitude that had millions of French workers sitting in and taking over factories after the Popular Front had won its electoral victory and gained legitimate control of the governmental framework.

We have been looking at the film in terms of theme and character, but the real power of *Lange* as an expression of Popular Front consciousness derives not so much from what is said as from how it is said, in other words from Renoir's special use of the cinematic language. And in this film we are dealing with

two completely different models of structural organisation, in terms both of the *mise en scène* and of montage.

The first model defines the world of Batala. Here the *mise en scène* is generally closed. We most often see him inside, in his office, forever shutting doors and windows, especially when he is involved with his deals and exploitation of women. Corners are used to emphasise the idea of 'huis clos'. Estelle is trapped in a corner by Batala before he seduces her. He himself is trapped at the end in a corner of the courtyard. Even on a staircase, which is generally assumed by the codes of graphic arts to imply some sort of dynamic, continuous motion, Batala is shown to represent an arrest of movement. While arguing with Buisson, who is trying to collect on a loan, he starts up the stairs only to come down, up again only to come down, an action which is repeated seven or eight times.

In terms of the editing, there is a similar arrestation of fluid movement. In many of the scenes involving Batala, notably those in which he confronts a character like Baigneur whom he exploits and controls, Renoir resorts to the distinctive cutting back and forth between characters, the old Hollywood 'découpage classique'. In the scene with Baigneur, there is further fragmentation and distortion through traditional dominant/submissive angle shots. But in scenes with characters like Lange and Valentine, who will ultimately emerge as stronger than the man who temporarily exploits them, there is a marked absence of fragmented editing or angle shots. As far as the camera and framing goes, for the Batala model it tends to be traditional and static. The camera more often than not frames a theatrical proscenium view and there is virtually no feeling of off-camera space. All this is supposedly uncharacteristic of Renoir, but is in fact an approach he uses to define the world of the capitalist.

The structural model of the world of Lange and his allies is markedly different. We are first introduced to it by a rambling, exploring camera, which investigates the room where he does his writing late at night. In a very long take, a roving camera eye takes in all the marvellous artefacts which adorn his walls, the gun holsters, cowboy hat, the map of the States, all sources of his inspiration for Arizona Jim. The room is small, yet how spacious and open it seems with this roving camera. How much more geometrically confining is Batala's office, where he is visually hemmed in by desk and filing cabinet and a rigidly held fixed frame. Throughout the film, in fact, Lange is associated with openness and space. Where Batala closes doors and windows, Lange leaves them open; often we see him framed by an open window or a doorway.

With the world of Lange, Renoir employs longer takes, shooting in depth, extensive use of panning shots as well as the rhythms of the actors within the frame. (Batala, it should be noted, is the grand old actor of the established French theatre; Lange is much more 'cinematic', generally communicating meaning through more subtle movements or no movement at all.) At one point in the film, as Lange's relationship with Valentine develops, they are bonded by a smooth camera sweep from Valentine in the courtyard to Lange framed by an open window. But camera movement and shooting in depth also serves to evoke the solidarity of the workers

and of the co-operative. When we are dealing with the printers and laundresses, it is through panning and tracking and shooting in depth. Crucial to this shooting style is the very architecture of the set.

The initial idea of using an entire courtyard came from Castanier, and was a marked departure from the standard commercial film of the day, which employed the three-sided theatre set for interiors and even many exteriors. The dramatic contribution in *Lange*, a true innovation, is to use a very real courtyard setting, a four-sided physical space. (It is quite pointed that, among several allusions in the film to Renoir's own film-making profession, there is one in which Lange, while filming the Arizona Jim series, refers to his abhorrence of phony sets.) It is the courtyard setting which sparks the fraternal solidarity that leads to the setting up of the co-operative upon the presumed death of Batala, and perhaps nowhere is that solidarity better captured than in the scene where the poster is torn from Charles' window and the camera pans slowly back and forth to various members of the co-operative

framed in windows. Given the ideological significance of the panning and tracking in the context of this particular film, the celebrated counter-clockwise 360 degree pan takes on added meaning. Not only does it constitute 'the pure spatial expression of the entire *mise en scène*', as André Bazin suggests, but it also implies the solidarity of the entire co-operative behind Lange's violent act of murder. And since the spectator is forced to follow the self-same path, as the camera tracks Lange from his office and down the steps, and then to experience the 360 degree turn, there is a certain degree of complicity required.

Throughout our analysis of *Le Crime de M. Lange*, we have been witnessing a sort of liberation struggle of Renoir's own unique approach to film-making. Like Lange, who rebels when Batala would have him plug Ranimax Pills in the Arizona Jim series, so too did Renoir rebel against having to submit to commercial pressure. He rejected the idea that he should have to film the farce *On Purge Bébé* in four days (which he did in 1931) to

Batala (Jules Berry) in the printing works; Lange (René Lefèvre, standing) and Valentine (Florelle) in the bistro setting which begins and ends the film



prove to producers that he could make money. He fought against a situation in which the producers of *La Chienne* denied him editing access to his own work. In opposition to arbitrarily assigned technical teams and hierarchically determined decisions, he offered his own conception of co-operative filmmaking. In opposition to a cinematography of classical *mise en scène* and montage, he offered his own freewheeling camerawork.

Renoir's own profession, being both capital and labour intensive, was a microcosm of that larger social struggle between capital and labour which came to a head in the 30s. In 1936 cinema 'workers', technicians as well as artists, fought for and won their own Collective Contract on the lines of the Matignon Agreements. Along with the regulation of salaries, wages and working conditions, one of the important provisions of this Collective Contract was to give autonomy to the film director vis-à-vis the producer. Here was a very real 'politique des auteurs', long before François Truffaut put forward the concept to become a popular battle cry. Jean Renoir anticipated all this with *Le Crime de M. Lange*; and thus, in a sense, the film can be seen as an expression of the social and artistic redressment of an entire professional cadre.

But in the final analysis, the most striking aspect of the film is the concordance between its manifest (thematic) content and latent (cinematographic) content, which makes its message particularly powerful. Indeed, it is the dramatic contrast of the two structural models that gives the thematic conflict its poignancy. On the one hand there is the world of the capitalist exploiter Batala, closed and claustrophobic, captured by a cinematography that is traditional and static. To this is opposed the world of Lange and the co-operative, open and airy, where the bonds of organic solidarity prevail, all translated through Renoir's radical aesthetic of long takes, panning, tracking, in depth shooting. And such was this cinematographic vision of the deep cleavage in French society on the eve of the electoral victory of the Popular Front.



La Marseillaise was filmed in the summer and autumn of 1937; and although there are many points of similarity between the two films, both in theme and structure, the whole tone and overall conception of *La Marseillaise* is more markedly defensive. The financing of this Ciné-Liberté backed film through popular subscription has by now become well-known. With the venture promoted by a broad spectrum of Popular Front organisations, the public, presumably the working class public, was encouraged to purchase tickets for the film in advance, thus contributing to its financial backing.

The choice of the French Revolution as subject matter for the film was clearly grounded in the social and political realities of the day. The Popular Front was the closest France had come to a revolutionary situation since the Paris Commune of 1871, and revolutionary élan, however romanticised, was high in 1936. By 1937, however, enthusiasm for the Popular Front had already begun to wane. Although wages had been increased through the Matignon Agreements of June 1936, prices had spiralled and the net gain to the average working man was wiped out. Moreover, there was much

bitterness over the Popular Front Government's decision not to intervene in the Spanish Civil War. A film on the French Revolution of 1789-92 could perpetuate and where necessary rekindle the élan of May and June 1936. As the Communist critic Georges Sadoul wrote in 1937: 'The points of resemblance between this period and our own, the similarity of popular sentiment which saved France and liberty in '92, and the sentiments which today animate the people of France, have not failed to strike us on the strictly historical level.'

In preparation for the film, as Renoir revealed in an illuminating article published in *Regards* (February, 1938), he carefully undertook to research the backgrounds of the 500 members of the Marseilles Battalion in the archives of Marseilles.* Renoir had a very contemporary motive for engaging in such research, apart from the desire to establish historical veracity. This was to explode the popular myth of the revolutionary, especially as promoted by anti-Communist propaganda, as a wild-eyed, irrational, criminal type on the fringes of society. As Renoir wrote: 'This slogan has helped fix in the mind of the bourgeois public this prefabricated image of the revolutionary as a sort of ravenous, hairy, dirty, ragged bandit who spends his days inflicting immoral, indecent and bloody injuries. Naturally, venality is another characteristic that one can tie to this image. Everyone knows that revolutionaries are always bought, as it has been said in a play on Marie Antoinette that is at present having a run at a theatre on the left bank.'

In the *Regards* article, Renoir went on to refer to slanderous descriptions of the Fédérés by royalist and other conservative writers and historians, portraying them as undesirable alien elements which had permeated French society and were the cause of its undoing. The relevance to the situation in the 30s was striking, for the right wing press had engaged in a virulent anti-semitic

* Actually it was Mme Jean-Paul Le Chanois who sifted through the material in the archives.

'*La Marseillaise*': Louis XVI (Pierre Renoir)



campaign against Popular Front leader Léon Blum. He was considered to be an outsider, a subversive alien, because he was Jewish and therefore somehow unFrench.

To answer the charge that the Fédérés were foreigners, specifically Italians, Renoir examined the list of names and ranks of the Marseilles Battalion and found that their nationality was unquestionably French. To establish them as honest citizens instead of bandits, he cited the conditions on which they were admitted to the Battalion: apparently one had to show that one had the financial resources to support one's family while serving as a volunteer, to show that one was free from debts, never to have been indicted before a court of justice, and to have had some sort of military background. All these qualifications are faithfully recorded in the film to press home the point. Finally, by examining the backgrounds of the volunteers, Renoir showed that far from being social outcasts or misfits, the Fédérés were made up of former army officers, city magistrates, stone masons, carpenters and agricultural workers. He concluded: 'Thus, we are quite far from the troop of bandits so magnificently described by anti-revolutionary writers... Let us hope that by frequenting this friendly troop, our revolutionary comrades of today will be consoled in the face of calumnies which a certain press inflicts upon them.'

In the last few months, missing issues of the review *Ciné-Liberté*, including a special issue of 12 March 1937 devoted to *La Marseillaise*, have been unearthed in Holland by the Dutch historian Bert Hogenkamp. This issue gives us further insight into the genesis of the film. There is, for example, a copy of the original script outline submitted to the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs, which gives us still more of an idea as to the intentions behind the film.

Apparently there was some controversy over its very title, as Renoir revealed in an article in the special issue. This was a time when the tricolor vied with the red flag and the Marseillaise with the Internationale at

Popular Front mass meetings. For Renoir, it was 'unbelievable' that such a petty controversy should come to the forefront at this particular moment. It is often asked of films sponsored by political groups whether they are preaching to their own supporters or trying to win new converts. Renoir's insistence on the title *La Marseillaise* points to an attempt to reach the broadest cross-section of the public. Still another consideration was censorship, since the Communist Party film *La Vie est à Nous* still was not granted a censorship visa for commercial distribution even after the Popular Front Government had taken office. As another *Ciné-Liberté* article expressed it: 'Thinking that the film could be projected without risk of censorship and without being attacked by our enemies because it traces an acknowledged glorious period of our history, so that it could serve as French propaganda at Exposition 1937 and in various countries that would be inclined to purchase it, we adopted the project with unanimity.'

There was still a further dimension to focusing on the actual song 'La Marseillaise'. There is a pointed dialogue reference in the film to the fact that the tune was originally a Jewish pedlar's song, which was then taken up by the Army of the Rhine. Here again Renoir confronts head on and tries to combat the virulent anti-semitism of the day, as he does in *La Grande Illusion* and *La Règle du Jeu*.

In explaining why he did not begin with the classic fall of the Bastille, Renoir wrote: 'The taking of the Bastille seemed to us cinematographically dangerous. The Americans have already shot several sumptuous films in which this event figures prominently, and they have offered admirable period set reconstructions of which we mustn't think. This is the material reason that has pushed us to begin our film in a village.' Hollywood films on the French Revolution had, according to Renoir, put forward all kinds of myths and clichés which had become embedded in public consciousness. *La Marseillaise* was to be an act of demythification, and the first myth

Renoir was trying to explode was the idea that the Revolution consisted of a few glorious and spectacular events like the storming of the Bastille. It is significant that the film starts with the day after the fall of the Bastille and traces the Revolution up to the victory of Valmy, conceiving of it as a day to day struggle.

Renoir was also trying to get away from viewing the Revolution as the work of a few heroic figures like Mirabeau, Danton or Robespierre. Instead, he focused on the band of 500 volunteers from Marseilles who travelled to Paris to defend the Revolution against counter-attack and who also participated in the overthrow of the monarchy on 10 August, 1792. Renoir pointed out the persistence of the 'hero myth' in an anecdote published in a publicity brochure. While plans were being made for the film, a woman came to his office having prepared the role of Charlotte Corday, Marat's assassin. She was convinced that any film on the French Revolution must have a Charlotte Corday, and was utterly taken aback to discover that they had no use for her. 'There was also a reincarnation of Mirabeau who visited us frequently. When we swore to this man that the great tribunal had no place in our film, he stared at us blankly, suspecting some sort of conspiracy.' It may be argued, of course, that at the same time that Renoir was exploding some myths, he was setting up his own myths in opposition, especially since the film was consciously intended as Popular Front propaganda. As Pascal Ory has pointed out, Renoir's Revolution was one of the most bloodless of all time; and in a very calculated fashion, when blood is finally spilt, it is foreign, Swiss blood rather than French.

Once again, as in *Le Crime de M. Lange*, Renoir sets up in *La Marseillaise* a structural stylistic opposition between two worlds, that of the king and aristocrats versus that of the people, a static model of the past versus a dynamic model of the future. With the king and the court, we are drawn into interiors, drawing room settings, framed by a relatively

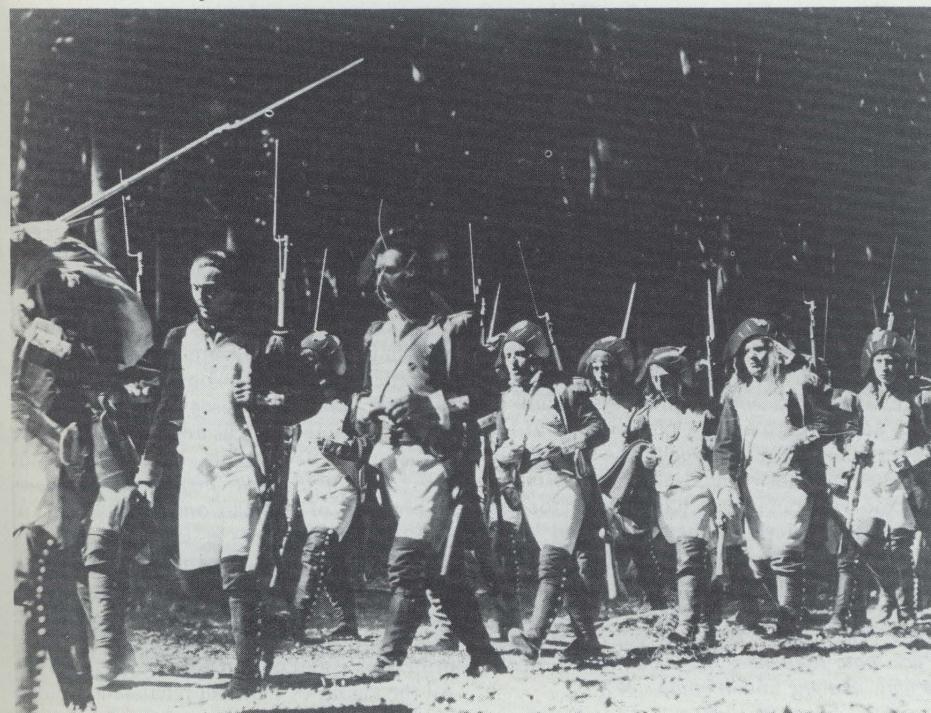
static camera capturing a theatrical proscenium view. And when the king and his courtiers finally emerge into nature, it is only to enter a classical garden in the style of Le Nôtre which mirrors their own rigidly symmetrical positioning. In this poignant scene, it is only the young Dauphin who is able momentarily to break out of the fixed pattern by cavorting in a pile of leaves.

The world of the people, on the other hand, belongs largely to exteriors, settings in nature. There is a great deal of movement, disorder and confusion, both visually and with a highly complex track of superimposed sounds, dialogue and music. We have a repetition of the lengthy takes, in depth shooting, heightened camera mobility and movement of actors within the frame that was associated with the world of Lange.

One of the key scenes which are revealing of this sort of aesthetic is that in which the Marseilles 500 assemble and prepare to march off to Paris leaving loved ones behind. For this scene, Renoir had constructed a special crane which enabled him to make an extraordinary crabbing shot of the Fédérés in one of the most distinctive long takes in the film. The whole way in which Renoir handles the crowd is illuminating. It is very rarely that one sees Fédérés and townspeople *en masse*, and this at a time when mass demonstrations both of the Right and Left dominated the newsreels. Renoir prefers to focus on isolated groups within the larger crowd, tracking back and forth to emphasise the bonds of solidarity between them. Indeed, he never strays far from that intimate bistro camaraderie of *Lange*, even within the massive scale of the French Revolution. Although it was Renoir's predilection to film in this way, it also made effective propaganda for would-be converts, who might have been scared off by high, wide angle shots of mass crowds.

La Marseillaise is an unusual film in that a good deal was written about it at the time it was being made, particularly by Renoir himself. On the whole, during the first fifty years of film history, directors and technicians were not writing for posterity; they were too busy making films. With this film, however, Renoir and *Ciné-Liberté* were highly conscious of their historical mission and propagandist role, and they have provided the historian with abundant documentation as to their intentions. But of course the historian must look to the films themselves as the central documents, and a major aspect of this study has been to examine cinematic form and content as an expression of the times, to try to uncover the complexity of the cinematic text, the 'galaxy of signifiers', in Roland Barthes' words, revealing some of the tensions and dilemmas of France in the crisis years of the Popular Front.

'La Marseillaise': troops on the march



In recent years there has been increased attention focused on leftist cinema in France during the 30s. Articles on the subject include: Goffredo Fofi, 'The Cinema of the Popular Front in France (1934-38)', *Screen*, Vol. 13 no. 4 (Winter 1972-73); Pascal Ory, 'De Ciné-Liberté à La Marseillaise, Espoirs et limites d'un cinéma libéré (1936-1938)', *Le Mouvement Social* no. 91 (April-June 1975); Elizabeth Grottel Strelbel, 'French Social Cinema and the Popular Front', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12 (1977).

The Film Company of Ireland

Taylor Downing

Two films have recently been deposited at the National Film Archive which constitute the only surviving record of a long forgotten and almost totally ignored Irish political film heritage.* The films, *Knocknagow* (director Fred O'Donovan, 1918) and *Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn* (director John MacDonagh, 1920), were made by a remarkable group of film enthusiasts and political activists who came together to form the Film Company of Ireland. Unfortunately, few of the records of the Film Company have survived and nearly all its films are lost, so it is impossible wholly to reconstruct the history of the company. The availability of these two major films in the National Film Archive, however, should now go some way to restore the Film Company to its rightful place both in the history of the cinema and in Irish cultural affairs during the period between the Rising of 1916 and the Partition of Ireland in 1921.

The Film Company of Ireland was founded by James Mark Sullivan early in 1916, with offices in Sackville Street, Dublin (now O'Connell Street). Sullivan had emigrated from Killarney to the United States with his family as a young boy, and after an education which included the study of law at Yale he led a successful and profitable legal practice on the East Coast for many years. He returned to Ireland in early 1916, and his decision to establish the Film Company of Ireland was inspired by the work of D. W. Griffith, whose *The Birth of a Nation* had been produced in the previous year. Sullivan's money must have provided the initial investment for the Film Company, but unfortunately all its early productions on highly inflammable nitrate stock were destroyed in the flames of the Easter Rising of 1916.

*Liam O'Leary deposited the films at the National Film Archive and is the only film historian to have carried out extensive research in this area, soon to be published in a book entitled *Cinema Ireland 1896-1980*. I am greatly indebted to Mr. O'Leary, from whom much of the information in this article is drawn.

Within weeks of the Rising, the Company was back in business, producing a steady output of two or three-reelers all of which seem to have been directed by J. M. Kerrigan. Kerrigan was an actor at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, where he had been playing leading roles for at least eight years. He had appeared in the notorious first production of J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1907 and had featured in most of the major new plays presented at the Abbey since then. He probably began directing for the Film Company in the summer or early autumn of 1916 and he gave his last performance at the Abbey in Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* in October of that year. He later went on to become a popular character actor in Hollywood during the 20s and 30s. Unfortunately none of the films Kerrigan made at this time have survived, although their content can be guessed at from some titles: *The Miser's Gift*, *O'Neill of the Glen*, *Puck Fair Romance*, *An Unfair Love Affair*, *Widow Malone* and *Woman's Wit*.

By the end of 1916 the Film Company

seems to have produced at least nine films, quite an achievement for a small Dublin-based company. Perhaps there were some contacts between the Film Company of Ireland and an earlier chapter in the history of Irish film-making, when before the war the Kalem Film Company had sent their top director, Sidney Olcott, to Europe to shoot films on location with authentic local atmosphere. Olcott's first base was near Killarney, where in 1911 he produced two films, *Ireland the Oppressed* and *Rory O'Moore*, which in dealing with Ireland's tragic and rebellious past seem to have been politically explosive. After pressure from Kalem to leave aside such controversial subjects, Olcott turned to the romantic melodramas of the Irish-American playwright Dion Boucicault. Several of Boucicault's plays were adapted for the screen, including his most famous, *The Colleen Bawn*, in 1911, and also *The O'Neill* (from *Erin's Isle*) and *The Shaughran* in 1912 and *The Octoroon* in 1913. The short but productive life enjoyed by Kalem in Ireland did something to revive pride in the past and establish the Irishman on the screen as a genuine and natural social being rather than a red-faced, beer-drinking rustic stereotype. Although there appears to be no direct link between Kalem and the Film Company of Ireland, at least the feasibility of the production of silent features on Irish themes had been established by 1916, when Sullivan returned to Dublin determined to create a new Irish-based cinema.

At first, however, the Film Company was made up almost entirely of newcomers to the business and the art of cinema, who seem to have chosen film as a popular medium for the expression of their nationalist ideas. At a time when Ireland's literary and linguistic heritage was enjoying a wholesale revival, and something like a cultural renaissance was occurring under the direction of Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League, writers like W. B. Yeats and A. E. Russell were simultaneously burrowing into the folk-tales of native Ireland. Recalling a Gaelic past and harnessing it to a growing sense of nationalism, the Irish theatre had flourished in the early years of the century through the dramas of Synge, Lady Gregory, T. C. Murray, Thomas MacDonagh, and of course Yeats himself.

There were abundant connections between this theatrical movement and the Film Company of Ireland. Apart from Kerrigan, another leading performer at the Abbey was Fred O'Donovan, who joined the Film Company as a director in 1917 and went on to make *Knocknagow*. A few of the actors who appeared in the Company's features also played on the Abbey stage. But the stronger associations, at least from about 1918, were with the Irish Theatre Company, founded by Edward Martyn, Joseph Plunkett and Thomas MacDonagh as an alternative to the Abbey in 1914. John MacDonagh, the director of *Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn* and brother of Thomas, one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, was a leading actor and director in the Irish Theatre Company. This group's tradition of largely amateur productions was also closer to the Film Company of Ireland than the more professional and polished work of the Abbey. All the vigour of the Irish renaissance had so far produced no counterpart in the cinema,

except for the American-produced Kalem films. Now the Film Company of Ireland were to put some of this heritage on to the screen, with some of the same nationalist passion which had revitalised the stage. In a sense they tried to do for film what the Abbey had done for drama. That so little of their output should have survived is consequently a matter of historical regret.

In January 1917 the film *Ireland a Nation* was banned in Dublin, provoking a nationalist demonstration outside the Rotunda Cinema. The cinema, it was evident, could readily come under the scrutiny of the British authorities. This film, which had been made in England in 1914, was a dramatisation of the life of Robert Emmett, one of the great martyr-heroes of Irish nationalist tradition, who was tried and executed as a traitor after leading a hopeless uprising against the British in 1803. It is hardly surprising that such a story should have become so sensitive in Dublin, where the film was released only eight months after the 'blood sacrifice' of Padraig Pearse and the 1916 rebels, fifteen of whom had been executed. Whether it was this incident alone, or a generally increased awareness by the British government at about this time of the potential of films as propaganda (the War Office Cinematograph Committee had been created in October 1916 under the chairmanship of Lord Beaverbrook), in any case the Film Company of Ireland soon became an obvious object of suspicion.

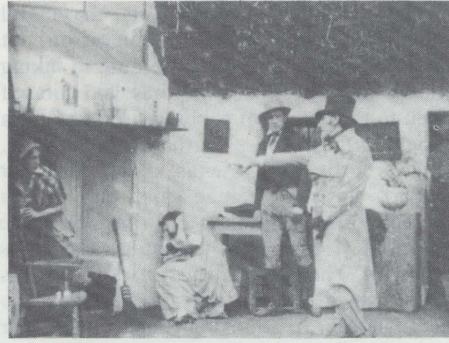
Finally, 1917 was to be a crucial period for Ireland's history, being the year in which a sizeable body of public opinion swung round fully behind the republican cause. From February 1917, Sinn Fein candidates began to be victorious in by-elections; and as promised by Arthur Griffith, they refused to take their seats at Westminster. Eamon de Valera, one of the successful Sinn Feiners, in the July East Clare by-election, was still serving a sentence in a British prison for his part in the 1916 Rising when he was nominated for the seat. These Sinn Fein victories, and anger over the death in prison of Thomas Ashe, another of the 1916 leaders who died of injuries received during forced-feeding while on hunger strike, all heralded a shift in Irish opinion away from the Home Rule Parliamentary Party of John Redmond, away from constitutional methods as a means of attaining nationhood, and towards Griffith's Sinn Fein Party and a belief in the ideal of an independent republican Ireland.

It is only in this context that all political and cultural activity in Ireland at the time can be understood. And it is not surprising, therefore, that during the summer of 1917 the Film Company began preparation on by far the most ambitious project they had yet attempted. Fred O'Donovan had been acting at the Abbey since 1908 and became their principal director in 1917. In that year he joined the Film Company of Ireland and directed *When Love Came to Gavin Burke*. Now, probably during the summer when the Abbey company were out of Dublin performing in London, O'Donovan began work on a project close to the hearts of many Irishmen, a screen version of the book sometimes said to be the second most popular in Ireland, after only the Bible, Charles Kickham's novel *Knocknagow*.

First published in 1873, in true mid-

Victorian prose style, *Knocknagow* is a melancholy tale of country life set in an impoverished post-famine village in Tipperary, and presents many of the true tragic features of mid-nineteenth century Irish rural existence. The book features absentee landlords and despotic land agents, evictions and the destitution of families thrown from their homesteads on to the roadside, emigration which offered the only means of escape for the very poor from a cycle of misery and starvation, widespread disease and especially endemic tuberculosis, all interwoven in the story.

Nationalist issues underlie these themes, and the film version even opens with a verse from Thomas Davis, the poetic leader of the



'Knocknagow': the scheming land agent; the burning cottage with title superimposed; the director, Fred O'Donovan, playing the romantic lead

Young Ireland movement in the 1840s and editor of the influential *The Nation*. There is an eviction sequence which spares no punches. The melodramatically evil land agent, Pender, is described as the 'black cloud' on the Tipperary horizon who 'hoped to drive the tenants one by one from the county to have cattle and not sheep on the land.' When asked, 'But how about the people?' he replies, 'Cattle are more important, sir.' The evictions take place with the utmost brutality and the jubilant Pender watches as the O'Brian family's thatched cottage is burnt to the ground to prevent repossession. The titles declare, 'Out into the cold roadside he drove them in the name of a Christian and benevolent law', superimposed

over the burning cottage. Later they cry out, 'What hard fate denies even poverty's crumbs to a man in his own country?' and there follows a shot of the family sheltering in a ditch, relying on the charity of neighbours to stay alive. (There is a young child in this sequence played by a 7-year-old Cyril Cusack.) With folk memories of the Land League and the Boycott campaign against the over-powerful landlords, such a sequence must have had a tremendous impact at a time of great Sinn Fein enthusiasm.

Mat Donovan (played by Brian MacGowan) is the central character in the story. Mat is the sort of noble-yeoman hero who actually owns his own cottage freehold and so is beyond the power of the scheming Pender to evict. He represents the strength of honest, true Ireland, the heart of 'the simple kindly folk who lived in the Homes of Tipperary', but also he is a representation of the fortitude that ensues from being secure in the tenure of one's own home and not being forced to live on the verge of potential eviction and starvation as do the rest of the community. When he is temporarily driven to emigrate, the titles proclaim, 'What curse is on this land of ours when men like Mat Donovan are forced from its shores?' Mat says: 'Goodbye, dear Ireland, you are a rich and rare land although poverty is forced upon you.' Mat epitomises the virtue of Irish manhood and represents what Ireland could be if she were free.

The film was shot through the late summer and autumn of 1917 and was released in February 1918. The director, Fred O'Donovan, also played the part of Arthur O'Connor, whose love for Mary Kearney is at the centre of the narrative. The structure of the film is cumbersome and complex, reflecting in part the prosaic form of the original novel; the surviving print, now in the National Film Archive, unfortunately has complete sections missing, and with the multitude of characters who come and go it is by no means easy to follow the thread of the storyline. The British trade journal *The Bioscope* complained that the film was hard to follow when it was first released in London in October 1919. 'The main plot,' the reviewer said, 'is continually obscured by irrelevant side issues... Submitted to an expert editor, the production may, however, be enormously clarified and improved.' *The Bioscope* was also worried about 'the vehemently Irish point of view' of the film, about which 'there is more than a suspicion of underlying propaganda.' Nevertheless, the reviewer admitted that *Knocknagow* was 'by no means without charm and interest' and was 'often vivid and delightful'.

Despite the worries of the trade, the film in fact presents no political analysis of Ireland's problems. There is, for instance, a simple paternalistic faith in the benevolence of the landlord Sir Garret Butler, who is away living in Italy in the belief that all is happiness and contentment in Knocknagow. When confronted with a more realistic picture of the misery his land agent is causing, Sir Garret hurries home and sacks Pender just as he is about to evict the Kearneys, a gentry family who stand to lose as much as the poorest family in the village. There is an overriding sentimental belief throughout the film that if a community endures hardship and suffering over time then it will somehow attain a more just existence and become a better society.

This attitude is most clearly expressed by Mat on returning to Knocknagow when he declares, 'Fellow Irishmen... We are a moral people above crime and a clean-hearted race must eventually come into its own, no matter how long the journey, no matter how hard the road.' Regardless of how appealing in a simple Catholic way this politically naive line actually was, it is very much at the root of Kickham's romanticised vision. Despite these reservations, and the fact that the book provided a scope too ambitious for the Film Company in 1917 to come fully to grips with, the display of technical proficiency and the sheer scale of the enterprise are considerably impressive.

The Film Company must now have frequently come under the eye of the watchful authorities, not only for its pursuit of loosely nationalistic stories focusing on Ireland's past miseries, but also because members of the company were themselves playing a sort of double life. Part of the time they were working for the Film Company, and the rest of the time they were political activists helping to organise the campaign to get the British out of Ireland.

The shooting of the other major feature to survive, *Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn*, seems to have been interrupted while some of the cast were arrested and carried off to spend time in British prisons. They included George Nesbit, who plays Squire Folliard, and Jim Plant (Sir Robert Whitecraft). Both actors used false names in the credits to escape identification by the authorities. Liam O'Leary believes that the director, John MacDonagh, probably a member of the Irish Republican Army, might well have taken the part of Tom the Fool in the film, again using a false name in the credits.

John MacDonagh was the brother of Thomas, who was an early member of the National Volunteers, co-organiser of the landing of Erskine Childers' gun-running escapade in 1914, and a prominent member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood who was executed for his role in the 1916 Rising. He had written the play *When the Dawn Is Come*, which was presented at the Abbey in 1908 and prophesied a war to free Ireland from the British, and was co-founder of the Irish Theatre Company in 1914 with Joseph Plunkett (also executed in 1916) and Edward Martyn. Furthermore, *Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn* was shot on location at St Enda's College at Rathfarnham, the school founded by Padraig Pearse (the leader of the 1916 Rising) and Thomas MacDonagh in 1908. The school had been founded to further the revival of Gaelic language, learning and culture, and a more obviously symbolic nationalist location could hardly be imagined. Now, through the Film Company of Ireland, two of the strands of Irish nationalism were being brought together. There was the political tradition of opposition to Britain, and the cultural tradition of cultivating an independent literature, theatre and now cinema.

The film was publicised as a story that would help to break down sectarian intolerance, and it used as its basis a sort of Irish Romeo and Juliet theme set in the days of the Penal Laws of the eighteenth century. It too was adapted from a literary original, William Carleton's novel of the same name, and popular Irish stories of the eighteenth

century. A good Protestant gentleman, Squire Folliard, is held up by bandits but rescued by a dashing young Catholic, Willy Reilly (played by Brian MacGowan, who had played Mat Donovan in *Knocknagow*). The grateful Squire introduces the young hero to his beautiful daughter, Helen, and predictably they fall in love. Helen, however, is already promised to Sir Robert Whitecraft 'notorious as a hunter of Catholics', a man of her father's age whom she despises. The bandit, named the Red Raparee, plots with Sir Robert against their common foe Reilly to damn him in the eyes of the kindly Squire.

Hearing of this plot, Willy Reilly flees, is pursued by Sir Robert as a hunted papist, but returns to elope with Helen when he learns that the hated marriage is about to be forced on her. Sir Robert again sets chase and catches the lovers. Reilly is put in prison, not for eloping with Helen but because in taking charge of her jewellery he has laid himself open to the charge of robbing a Protestant, a capital offence for a Catholic. Meanwhile, Reilly's Protestant friends decide that Sir Robert has now gone too far in his persecution of Catholics and that the 'sense of decency' of all Protestant gentlemen is outraged. They consequently arrange for his arrest, which takes place just as he is about to marry Helen. In a moving trial sequence, Sir Robert and the Red Raparee are condemned and Willy Reilly is found guilty, but as the foreman of the jury puts it, 'not of the robbery of the jewels, only of the minor offence of abduction!' Helen hears only the word 'Guilty' and falls immediately into a state of despair as Reilly is exiled for seven years. After that time has passed, he returns to find the Colleen Bawn still in a melancholy madness which ends when they are reunited. The film ends with them literally living happily ever after, a Catholic hero and a Protestant beauty.

If *Knocknagow* is a little crude in its narrative style, this certainly cannot be said of *Willy Reilly*. Despite the problems of shooting the film in the intervals when the cast were not in prison, there is a clear and driving narrative which is evident even in the rather jumbled set of prints held at the National Film Archive. The sequence in which Reilly's Protestant friend, named Hastings, rides from Dublin having obtained a warrant for Sir Robert's arrest begins with a shot of a horseman riding at full gallop across the countryside. There is a cut to the Colleen Bawn at her dressing table, her maid glumly making her up for the wedding ceremony. Then a cut to a shot of Willy Reilly in a dark prison cell longing for the Colleen Bawn, who appears as if in his dream, superimposed on the other half of the frame, only to fade away out of reach as he puts out his arms to her. We cut back to Helen at her dressing table, then to Hastings riding down a gravel road, and then to the wedding ceremony, which is peremptorily interrupted by Hastings with the warrant and the announcement, 'You have other business than a wedding this morning, sir.'

This cross-cutting between three narrative strands is certainly not innovative for 1920, but it does display a clear grasp of the code of suspense building. Griffith's last-minute-rescue sequences were famous, and the best known of all is that in *Intolerance* (1916) in which a man is led to the scaffold to be



'Willy Reilly': full shot of the courtroom, followed by a cut to close-up of the Colleen Bawn; Whitecraft and British soldiers outside St. Enda's College at Rathfarnham, the film's main location

hanged while his friends hurry across the state to deliver the Governor's pardon. The parallels in structure and rhythm show that Griffith's style had been absorbed in Dublin; and of course the Film Company were themselves keen to produce epics in the Griffith mould.

The court scene also indicates familiarity with another device developed before the First World War and by this time in fairly common currency. This is the close-up used to heighten dramatic tension at a key moment, and MacDonagh employs it in the court scene to great effect. The first sequence cuts from the anguished Reilly in his cell to a wide establishing shot of the courtroom laid out as if in the proscenium of the frame, and then to a close-up of the judge as he puts on the black cap. The death sentence, however, is not upon Willy Reilly, but upon the Red Raparee and Sir Robert Whitecraft. The hero is then put on trial, and the Colleen Bawn is brought in as a witness. The film cuts to two long and intense close-ups as the lovers stare at each other across the court. As the evidence of the supposedly stolen jewellery is produced the film cuts from a wide-shot of the court to a rather melodramatic close-up of the Colleen Bawn, and then we see cutaways of expressions on the faces of the judge, of Reilly and of a juror as they listen to her 'pledge of undying love'. Finally, there is the wide-shot of the full spectacle of the court formally arrayed to pass judgment on this



Willy Reilly, in his prison cell, sees the dream image of the Colleen Bawn

human drama. Our attention is effectively shifted around the court to maximise dramatic tension.

MacDonagh also makes an interesting use of the flashback. This is used first to illustrate what did actually happen, as when the Squire relates to his daughter the story of his rescue, and the audience sees the same shot used earlier repeated. Later, a flashback device is used to illustrate a story about the past which we know to be untrue. The shot, which occurs when Sir Robert and Red Raparee are giving the Squire their version of the hold-up incident, is of Reilly handing over payment of fifty gold pieces to the Raparee. This is a scene which the audience has not seen before and of course does not believe actually occurred; and its use implies a degree of sophistication on behalf of the audience, who must see these scenes not only as the reality of the story but as a fabrication on that reality. In all, it can be said that, despite inexperience and the lack of a continuous tradition of film production in Ireland, the surviving features of the Film Company display an impressive grasp of filmcraft.

Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn was released in the year before the Partition of Ireland. The fact that Partition might become a reality was, in 1920, a summation devoutly to be opposed by nationalists of the school of MacDonagh and the Film Company. The film was thus designed as a sort of paean on Catholic-Protestant co-operation, to try to prevent the sectarian divide from taking place which could only bring lasting religious aggravation to Ireland. Willy Reilly declares at one point that he had to go abroad to a Jesuit school because, 'Your laws forbade me receiving the education of a gentleman in my own country', a reference to the anti-Catholic educational legislation in the Penal Laws of the eighteenth century. Repeatedly Protestants praise the virtues of Catholics and vice versa. The old Squire Folliard says of Reilly, 'He's a damn fine man, Helen, though he be a Catholic', and at one point Tom the Fool and his cronies enjoy the

generosity of the Squire's household and drink to 'good Protestant cheer'. There is a sequence during Reilly's sojourn in hiding when he attends a secret mass being conducted in the hills; British soldiers raid the service and arrest the priest, who is later hanged for his pains by Sir Robert Whitecraft. But the officer leading the raid admits to the courageous priest who defends his communicants, 'You may be a priest but you're a brave man.' Comments like these were designed to produce more than a wry smile in the Ireland of 1920.

But the film goes a stage further, acting as something of a political parable for its time. Whitecraft epitomises the militant, aggressive Protestant ethic, the witch-hunting anti-Catholic spirit found in the hard-core Protestants of Ulster for whom Home Rule meant Rome Rule and who were prepared to fight to defend the Union with Britain. He is finally outlawed, however, by his own co-religionists, Hastings and a friendly clergyman, the Reverend Brown, who at one point says to Reilly, 'Rising above every consideration is the fact that we are fellow-Irishmen.' This, in effect, is the dictum of the film, and the message to be drawn from it is obvious. The true interests of all Irishmen transcend the sectarian divide, and it is the duty of all true Irishmen to put this aside—and hence by implication to strive for a united and independent Ireland. The fact that it is a Protestant gentleman and clergyman who bring down Sir Robert is not only a defeat for the hard-line extremism that Ulster seemed to represent in 1920 but also a victory for unified Irishness. The final coming together of Willy Reilly and the Colleen Bawn is not only the denouement in a match of star-crossed lovers, but an image of the only practical way forward for Ireland, the union of Catholic and Protestant in one nation.

Events of the next few years in Ireland, the war with Britain, the creation of the Northern state and the anti-Catholic pogroms of Belfast and Derry, the granting of independence to the South followed by a civil

war between factions of the republican movement, all made the objectives of this film increasingly naive and irrelevant. In 1920, however, it expressed the optimistic hope of men whose nationalist vision of a United Ireland had not yet been severed by a British prime minister and a bitter civil war.

Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn was the last major project of the Film Company of Ireland, for whom disillusionment must soon have set in. John MacDonagh himself directed another shorter film in 1920, a whimsical comedy called *Paying the Rent* about a man who goes off to pay the rent but is distracted by his friends and loses everything on the horses. The film was shot by Brian MacGowan, which is an indication of the collective team effort that went into the Film Company's productions. Only one reel of it now survives, at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin.

There are no further references to production, and the Film Company seems to have folded at about this time. James Mark Sullivan's wife and son died in the flu epidemic of that year, Sullivan himself returned to the United States to revive his law practice, and no doubt the withdrawal of his cash must have seriously upset the company's finances. Also, the worsening political situation and the increasingly open use of violence provided the backdrop for a spreading disillusionment. Even the Abbey Theatre had to close its doors when the eight o'clock curfew came into effect in Dublin, and in 1921 the players spent much of their time away in London. And the Irish Theatre Company, which had struggled on for a few years after the execution in 1916 of two of its directors, also went out of business at about this time.

In any case, a short-lived but exciting period in the Irish cinema was over and a unique experiment in Irish political film-making disappeared from the scene. Unlike the Abbey Theatre, which in 1924 became a national theatre, receiving public funds and enjoying a new lease of life with the plays of Sean O'Casey and George Shiels and the performances of Arthur Shields, Barry Fitzgerald and Cyril Cusack, the Film Company of Ireland has never reappeared. Something of the spirit of these early films was briefly revived in 1936, when a group of enthusiasts in Killarney came together to make a feature about the Anglo-Irish war called, interestingly enough, *The Dawn*; but this was a one-off venture and led to nothing. That the tradition of the Film Company of Ireland should have had no lasting effect, and that so little of all its productive energy should have survived, is a loss greatly to be mourned.

Credit title for 'Knocknagow'



Kevin Brownlow

BEN

In academic circles, it is held that the director is responsible for every aspect of a film; the art director merely obeys his commands. And this is often true. But academics—and historians—are orderly people, who dislike the everyday jumble of reality and tend to sweep it into neat compartments. I am no exception. For years, I was fascinated by the work of a director called Maurice Tourneur, a Frenchman who went to America in 1914. Tourneur was obsessed with atmosphere and detail, and his films had a profound impact on the work of two other pictorialists, Rex Ingram and Josef von Sternberg. His contribution did not change movies overnight, or throw film-makers into confusion. It was a subtle thing. He realised the emotional qualities inherent in lighting and composition and worked with dark foregrounds, altering his technique from extreme realism to bold abstraction to suit the story he was telling.

CARRÉ

Ben Carré set for 'Dante's Inferno' (1934): the girl with arm upraised became Mrs Carré



Had Tourneur been successful as a painter, he would almost certainly have been lost to the cinema. For despite the fact that he studied with Rodin and with Puvis de Chavannes, his own painting was amateurish. His desire to express himself visually was frustrated until he discovered the cinema. Here he was able to indulge his sense of composition and tone, producing scenes which on canvas might have been hackneyed and dull, but which on the screen seemed strikingly original. Because of his high standards—and poor execution—he needed an art director who could match his ideals. He found him, by accident, and although both were Frenchmen, they worked together only in America.

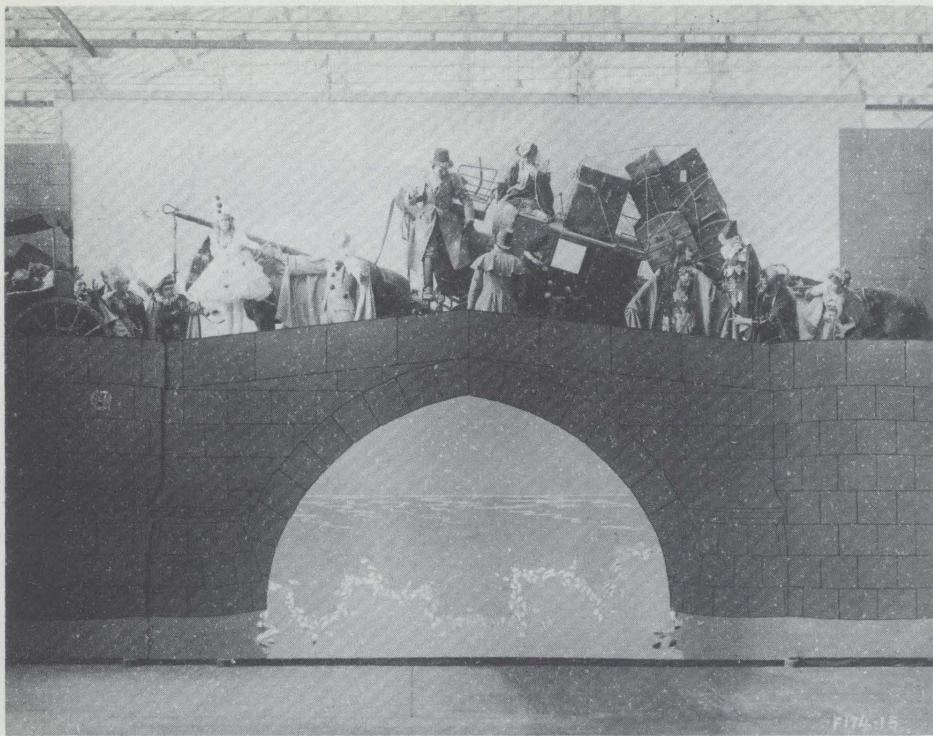
I first encountered Ben Carré's name in a 1961 article by George Geltzer in *Films in Review*. The article covered the career of Tourneur, but did not make the error that I had been making, of attributing everything to Tourneur himself. George Geltzer stressed the contribution of Carré, who had collaborated with Tourneur on no less than 34 pictures—virtually the entire span of Tourneur's *grande époque*. I assumed that Carré had long since died; after all, he had begun as a scenic painter for the theatre in 1900. But on a trip to California in the late 1960s, I found that not only was he very much alive—he had in fact only recently retired. He had been working as a scene painter at MGM until 1965, when he was 82; his last picture was *Ice Station Zebra*.

There was a photograph of Ben Carré in the Geltzer article; it suggested a hard, embittered man. His mouth seemed set in an expression of resolute misery. I did not look forward to the encounter. But I could hardly have made a more ludicrous misjudgment. Carré looked just like his photograph, and in fact was immediately recognisable from photographs taken sixty years before, but he was as ebullient and humorous as I had thought him bitter. He looked thirty years younger than he was, although I later discovered that he had no sense of age at all, was still going to life drawing classes, like an art student, and was as full of vigour, doubt and effort as a young person. His face and, I suspect, his character had changed as little as his voice. Carré was so French it was comic. He had arrived in America in 1912, intending to stay perhaps three years, and he had never bothered to learn English properly. As a result, he sounded as though he had just arrived. He massacred two languages in a unique blend of *franglais*, a deep, powerful voice making the accent all the more distinctive. 'Around the corner, the street was mouvemented'... 'I told him it was inutile'... 'The cranking was still freehand and the décalage frequent.' (Carré was highly amused by my reaction, and he sent me an occasional letter in *franglais*: 'I know your letter was not in the mail box as I not only trust my eyes but scratch avec my finger-nails the bottom of the tin box.')

Carré met his wife, Anne, just before he did *Dante's Inferno* (1934)—she played one of the shades, writhing in purgatory. In 1936, as a result of ill-health, he retired from art



Top and centre: two designs by Ben Carré for 'Phantom of the Opera' (1925); Carré was not the art director for the entire picture (that was Archer Havelock Hall and E. E. Sheeley) but designed all the catacomb scenes. Bottom: a still from the film, showing the design in action



The storybook simplicity of 'Prunella' (1918). The still includes more than was seen on the screen, and reveals part of the studio interior.

direction and returned to his first love, scenic painting. Anne Carré will play only an extra role in this article, but if anyone was responsible for his longevity, it was she. Not only did she encourage his painting, she was already the custodian of Carré's archives.

Their house, built for them by an architect friend, was in the Cheviot Hills district of Los Angeles, not far from MGM. One wall of the living room was packed with paintings, one of which I promptly bought. I'm convinced that one day Carré's work will be officially 'discovered', and will fetch high prices in the sale room. Down the stairs leading to the studio were more paintings—landscapes, apparently of the open countryside. Carré identified each one by its Hollywood street name; he had painted them when he first went out to California, in 1919, and now each spot is smothered in concrete.

The studio was in constant use. It opened out on to a Rousseau-like garden, refreshingly unlike the manicured lawns of Beverly Hills. Carré had built the paths, with mosaic brick of his own design. He had several paintings of the garden in its heyday. Sadly, the city had forced a freeway through the end of it, removing the trees and substituting a ceaseless roar.

Carré's paintings had varied in style over the years. He had very strong responses, which resulted in a set of Mexican pictures, after a trip there, a series on the desert, a group of underwater paintings, and one very small landscape, hanging on the wall of the studio: a view from the back of Tourneur's Paragon studio, Fort Lee, New Jersey, painted in the depths of the winter of 1916. It was strange how this apparently insignificant landscape invariably attracted the attention of visitors. So much of Carré's most creative work was summed up in that one tiny scene, preserved for half a century. The period at Fort Lee was only a small part of his career, but it was here that conditions were most favourable. It was here that he, Tourneur, cameraman John van den Broek and assistant director Clarence Brown created films which

were intended to be shown and forgotten in a few weeks but which have survived—some of them, at least—as beautiful, early examples of a new art.

Ben Carré was born in a working-class district of Paris in 1883. His father died when he was six, and his mother ran a small fruit and vegetable stall to hold the family together. The family included Ben, his sister, his aunt and his grandmother. Thanks to friends who worked in the theatre, the family were able to get free passes. 'My enthusiasm for the theatre was enormous,' wrote Carré in his unpublished memoirs. 'When I was ten, I used to go by myself to the Cirque d'Hiver. The matinées, running four hours, kept me off the streets, and I saw collapsible sets and transformations that helped me later solve problems in my motion picture work.'

Carré's first job was to calculate estimates for a painter-decorator—without pay, of course. Employers had an apprenticeship scheme, and young men were expected to spend the first two or three years working for nothing. The job, however, gave Carré the chance to tour Paris, examining a cross-section of interiors from the cellar to the garret. When he discovered his employer gambling his days away at the racetrack, Carré left; and in October 1900 he began a three-year apprenticeship with Atelier Amable, a scenic painting studio. What struck him most, when he first visited the building, was the number of people whistling, singing or humming.

At Amable, Carré was taught architectural drawing and the mysteries of perspective. His fellow-artists were traditionalists. Art nouveau may have been at its apogee, but they referred to it disparagingly as 'the Vermicelli period'. Nevertheless, these were among the most talented scenic artists in France, and Carré was beset by feelings of inadequacy. 'I felt I was such a novice. I had so much to learn . . .' His boss told him to go out and use his paint box, and Carré chose as his first subject the blocks of white stone cut

by stonemasons for use on building work. 'I became one of the first cubists without really meaning to.' He showed his sketch that lunchtime to one of the artists. 'He took it and placed it on a chair. Then he took some sugar cubes which he arranged to resemble my composition, and he began to give me a wonderful demonstration of how to paint white on white. He showed me the subtle differences of colour and pointed out the shadows and highlights. That day, I received a priceless lesson in theory and practice.'

Carré's mother was struggling under a severe financial burden, but when he approached Amable for a salary he was told, 'Absolutely not. If I pay you, I will have to pay the other apprentices as well.' Carré marched impulsively out of the job but returned months later, humiliated by unemployment. The old man rehired him—at ten sous an hour. 'I felt it was the happiest experience of my nineteen years.' His confidence was further boosted by an assignment to work solo on backdrops for the Paris Opera—an experience which demonstrated its value when Universal made *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925).

Carré became conscious of the importance of photography—something most self-respecting artists of the period despised. And he became more and more attracted by the new medium of moving pictures. He had attended the first Lumière programme when he was twelve. In 1906, at the age of twenty-three, he joined his friend Henri Menessier at Gaumont. His mother issued a warning: 'The cinema is only a fantasy that will be dead in two years. But the theatre will always be in existence.'

The atmosphere in the film studio was so different that Carré wondered whether the increase in salary was enough to compensate him. He thought it absurd that the scene painters worked in black and white. The cameramen were apparently afraid of what might happen when the colours were transformed in value. 'We stopped that one day by bringing in our own colours for a drop showing a landscape—and defying the established rule of black and white in scenery.' On the set, he noticed the respect accorded to a cast-iron platform. 'Everyone walked on tiptoe as he passed it, for concealed by a cover on top of it was the precious camera. It made you think of an idol enthroned on a pedestal.'

The first film Carré remembered by title was *La Course aux Potirons* (*The Pumpkin Race*), made by Emile Cohl in 1908. Cohl is better known for his pioneer animation work, but this was a live-action trick film. 'I saw nothing special about it when it was made, but the interest shown by film historians in recent years made me realise it was an unusual and inventive film. The only reason I remember it is because of the pumpkins. We were warned that they had to be able to withstand the roughest kind of treatment on stone stairways and badly paved streets.' The first attempts, it seems, were made of papier mâché, and they weren't good enough. Then someone had the idea of using straw; they employed the people who made straw baskets and hampers to turn out a quantity of 'pumpkins', and once they were painted—and retouched when necessary—they proved ideal.

Carré had spent six years in the scenic department at Gaumont when he was asked

by Etienne Arnaud if he wanted to go to America. Arnaud had opened a branch of Eclair at Fort Lee, New Jersey, and he assured Carré—who at that time could speak no English—that he would feel at home in the French colony at the Fort Lee studios. Carré agreed, although he felt sad at leaving Paris and guilty at leaving his family. His plan was to work in America for three years, save as much as he could, and return ‘to live and work at ease’.

But the Fort Lee studios proved a great disappointment. They were cramped and ill-equipped, and during Carré’s first year there few demands were made on him. Stories for the one- and two-reelers made by Eclair tended to be thought up on the night before shooting, and the air of improvisation hardly encouraged outstanding design. The American cinema, however, was changing over to feature production, and the new climate suited the ambition of Jules Brulatour.

Born in Louisiana, of French origin (he was thus a Creole), Jules Brulatour had been the agent for Lumière rawstock. During the Patents War, when Eastman stock was denied to the independents, he had grown rich. When he persuaded Eastman to sell on the open market, and established himself as the agent for Kodak film, he saw no end to his ambitions. ‘Once in a while, Brulatour came to the studio with visitors. This made me believe he was a silent partner in Eclair. I was never introduced to the visitors. One day (in 1914), a man was roaming around the

stage and Arnaud went over to talk to him. They passed me and Arnaud made the introduction. The man was a French director, Maurice Tourneur. Then they went away. I thought it was bizarre the way things were going on. I was surprised that Arnaud did not speak of the newcomer before I met him. Then the next morning I saw the new French director seated at a kitchen table, reading a play. I went on to see Arnaud, but he wasn’t in. I was told he had left for France. I went up to Maurice Tourneur and asked who was in charge now. He answered, “I am.” That was my introduction to the new boss.’

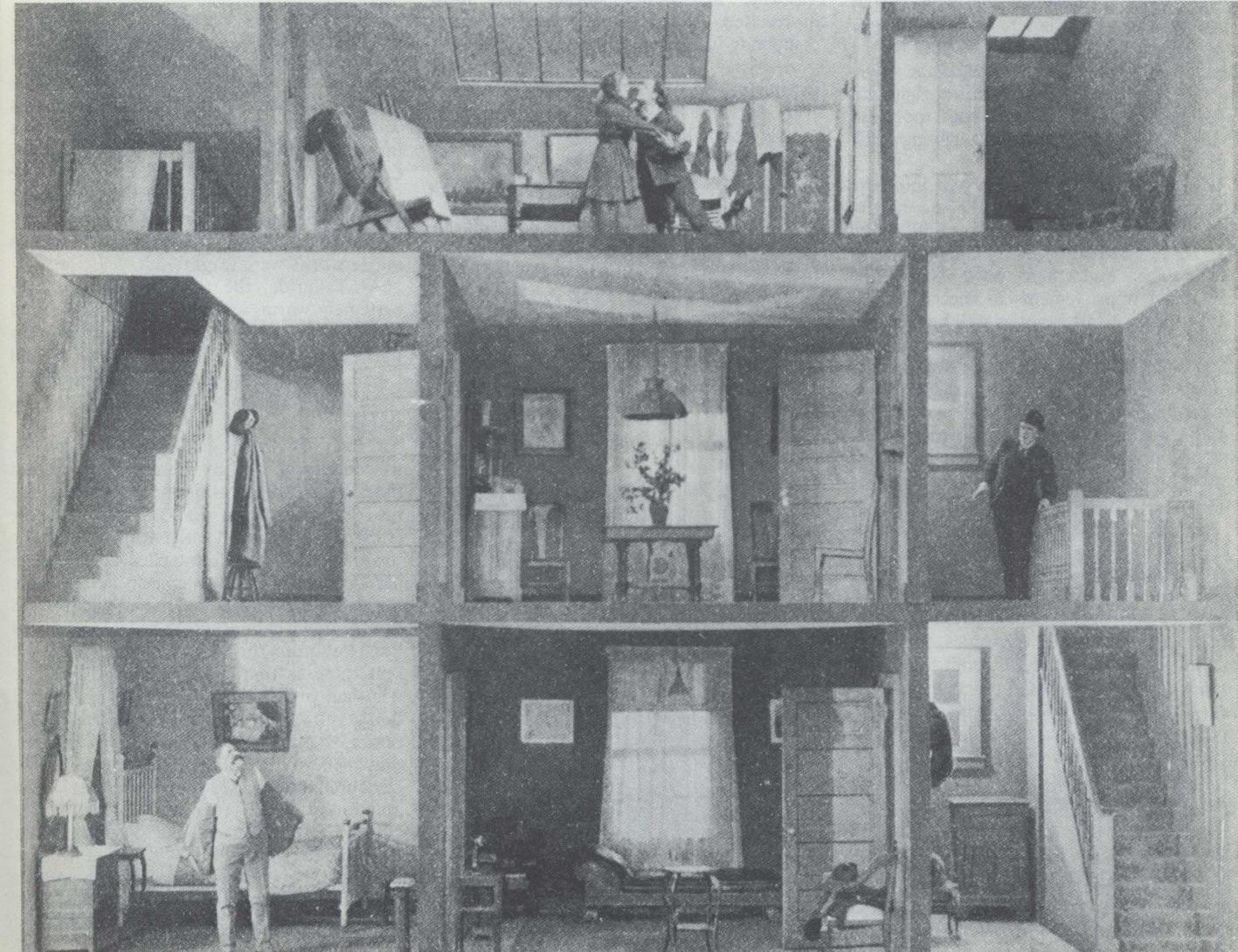
It is as difficult to overestimate the contribution of Ben Carré to the work of Maurice Tourneur as it is to overestimate the work of art directors in general. Had Tourneur arrived at Eclair to find only a routine set designer, there is no doubt that he would have raised a fuss until Brulatour found a man of outstanding skill. So it was no small compliment to Carré that Tourneur took him on trust and left him to his own devices. ‘You supply the set. I’ll supply the action.’ And Carré was fortunate, after his dull years, to join forces with a director of Tourneur’s talent. His sets for other directors led to some handsome productions, but Carré’s work was not exploited to the extent that it was by Tourneur. While the atmosphere he created for Capellani’s *Camille* (1915), for instance, is effective and unmistakably French, nowhere is it explored by an unexpected silhouette, a

sudden beam of light, a telling close-up—the trademarks of Tourneur.

During the 1914–18 War, the French film industry was shattered. The French emigrés at Fort Lee sought to compensate for this by turning out stories which were so carefully mounted that they might have been shot in France. Carré had to create Normandy, Brittany, even the Bois de Boulogne, at Fort Lee and its environs. When it became impossible to ship over furniture and fittings, he had to re-create even so minuscule an item as the handles for French windows.

For Tourneur’s *Trilby* (1915) the back streets of Paris were duplicated (very effectively) in Greenwich Village and the lower East Side. Since both Tourneur and Carré were familiar with the Latin Quarter, the film had strong personal associations. ‘I had to have a set for a painting class, and I duplicated the studio of Jules Adler in Paris, where I went to have my paintings criticised. In the story, Little Billee (Chester Barnett) is in love with Trilby (Clara Kimball Young). He doesn’t know she is a model, and when he comes to the class he is shocked to see her posing in the nude. For censorship, I disposed of the easels to cover Trilby’s body and make it appear that she had nothing on. To have the atmosphere of a painting class, somebody told the assistant director to approach the Art Centre School of New York on 57th Street. We got at least sixteen students, and after the scene was taken they were all given still pictures. I got one, and when I saw it again,

Ben Carré’s nine-room set for ‘The Hand of Peril’ (1916), copied from a contemporary magazine



years later, I recognised Cedric Gibbons.' (Gibbons went on to become head of the art department at MGM.)

Far more challenging for Carré was to recreate for *Pawn of Fate* (1916) a whole farm in Normandy—not just interiors, crowded with the right kind of crockery, furniture and implements, but the exteriors of the stone farmhouse and outbuildings, with the right kind of animals. His success was emphatically acknowledged by the reviewers. 'It is incredible,' said one, 'that such absolute colourless Corots of country France could have been taken in America.'

But realism was not the obsession with Tourneur and Carré that it would be for Rex Ingram or von Stroheim. Far from it. Both men were aided by a young cameraman of genius, John van den Broek, who was to be tragically drowned on location for *Woman* in 1918. He was gifted with a more sophisticated understanding of lighting than any of his contemporaries, and could switch his style to fantasy with startling ease. Sometimes, as in *The Hand of Peril* (1916), this break with realism occurred during an otherwise naturalistic production. 'In this film, the action called for constant shifting from one room to another, and this gave me the idea of using a cross-section of a house.' This film was the first to be made at the new Paragon studios, built especially for Tourneur by Brutalour, where the stage was large enough to accommodate the experiment. As Richard Koszarski has pointed out: 'A spectacularly "theatrical" effect, perhaps, but one which demonstrates a preoccupation with spatial unity of near Wellesian proportion.' Carré commented: 'Somebody used the idea on the stage a few years later. It dwarfed the stage, and moved the action up and down, right and left. The audience did not react too well. Theatregoers complained of having stiff necks.'

Tourneur and Carré plunged into the relatively unexplored world of screen fantasy with a Mary Pickford film, *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1917)*. So many fantasy films have been made since, and there have been such spectacular improvements in special effects, that this early effort is not as well known as it should be. The difference between the real world and the fantasy world is established by lighting and decor: the real world is three-dimensional, lit to emphasise the depth; the fantasy world exists on one plane, like an illustration in a story-book, with the kind of proscenium arch which distinguished the paintings of Puvis de Chavannes.

Poor Little Rich Girl was a box-office success, which encouraged Tourneur to think that audiences were ready for more experiments: he produced *The Blue Bird* and *Prunella* (both 1918), but while both were rapturously received by the critics, they were rejected at the box-office. In both films, Ben Carré's design was the star, together with van den Broek's camerawork, and *Blue Bird* represents both Tourneur and Carré at their most ambitious—a striving for abstraction which *Photoplay* called 'so beautiful that it fairly stings the senses'.



Maurice Tourneur

Tourneur breathed such life into the transparent photographic image, tinting it and toning it, and expending such care on the release prints, that to consider his work in anything other than the original form seems sacrilege. Unfortunately, the original form—printed on nitrate stock—is highly inflammable and subject to chemical decomposition. *Prunella*, which was called 'as perfect a photoplay as the screen has ever produced', has already been lost. But an original print of *Blue Bird* survives at George Eastman House—just. Decomposition is slowly eating it away, and it was copied too late to rescue the entire film; although Eastman House, to their credit, did copy it in colour.

Ben Carré talked frequently about *Blue Bird*, one of his most challenging tasks and, critically at least, among his most appreciated. 'I wish some day,' he said, 'somebody would come and ask me if I want to see one of the best films of Maurice Tourneur—*Blue Bird*.' And, as if in a scene from the film, Carré was given his wish. Shortly before he died (in May 1978), he was transported to a fairytale town in the mountains, called Telluride. A mining town, built in the 1880s, in the stupendous setting of the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Telluride held a film festival each year. Among its organisers were William K. Everson and Tom Luddy of the Pacific Film Archive. They persuaded Ben and his wife to come, and asked Eastman House to lend their original print of *The Blue Bird* for the occasion. Almost incredibly, as Everson pointed out, an audience of 1977 would encounter a

William K. Everson with Mr. and Mrs. Carré, Telluride, 1977



* Surviving prints of *Poor Little Rich Girl* are not only incomplete, but they contain several sequences which are in the wrong order. The fantasy sequences, which for Tourneur were probably the only justification for making the film, no longer make any sense.

contemporary of Lumière and Méliès.

A series of extracts from films designed by Carré, all superb 35 mm prints, culminated in *A Night at the Opera*, when Harpo scrambled over a series of painted backdrops. The audience cheered Carré to the echo as he came on stage; he was awarded the Telluride Medallion; and he took his place in the audience to watch *The Blue Bird*... almost sixty years after he had designed it.

There are few enough films of 1918 which one could show to a modern audience in the hope of entertaining them. But *The Blue Bird*, with its elaborate tints and tones, its charm and humour, clearly caught their imagination. Its style was that of the story-book—illustrations by Dulac, Parrish and Rackham—and the impressionistic stage design of Gordon Craig and Granville Barker, but so fresh for the cinema that each shot took one by surprise. It should have been the antithesis of cinema, this dream set against painted backcloths and cut-outs. But as Tourneur's mentor, Antoine, once said, 'light is the good fairy of the decor'; and van den Broek and Carré knew all about that. The 'wan sicknesses' are summoned up by a battery of alarming faces, appearing, on and off, in the black of the night, like electric light bulbs. A female statue kneels at the door of night, headless, like one's earliest nightmares. The trick work combines with the art direction to produce minor miracles like the Spirit of Water: a tap pours and the water freezes; the frozen water stirs and the Spirit emerges, her clothes duplicating the pattern of the ice.

The sets of *The Blue Bird* often anticipate the great days of Expressionism in the German cinema. But, alas, the experiment occurred in a vacuum. The resounding rejection at the box-office proved that this was not the path the American cinema intended to take. 'When *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was produced in Germany the following year,' wrote Richard Koszarski, 'it was heralded as the pioneer of a new non-naturalistic cinema, and Tourneur's two masterworks were forgotten.'

At Telluride, the audience reaction was extremely warm, and people crowded round Carré afterwards to say how entranced they had been. But life is not a fairy story and Carré, after all those years, was disappointed. 'It did not come up to expectations,' he said, frankly.

Carré had been greatly moved by the welcome given him by the audience. Several times he had been on the point of cancelling the trip—after all, he was 93. But he made the effort, and was seized with enthusiasm for the town. He and his wife travelled up the rough mountain tracks in an open jeep, and he made rapid sketches of deserted mine buildings and tumble-down cabins, which he later expanded into elaborate drawings and paintings. He sent these as thank you offerings for those who had organised the Telluride Festival. 'I don't know if I deserve all that marvellous praise,' he wrote in an accompanying note, 'but believe me, it is much nicer to be honoured and praised than to be overlooked and forgotten.' Thanks to Telluride, to the current Exhibition at the V and A, to Eastman House and the Museum of Modern Art—not to mention a new generation of film historians researching the lost years of 1910–20—the name of Ben Carré is unlikely to be forgotten again.

Michael Pilsworth

BUDDY, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME

THE TELEVISION CO-PRODUCTION BUSINESS IN BRITAIN

There is something wrong with British television. The heady days of the 1960s when the BBC's coffers were swollen with ever-increasing colour licence fee revenues have gone forever. The days when an autumn season would feature 75 one-off plays and fourteen contemporary series and serials (1965) have disappeared. Costume dramas, literary adaptations, talk shows, feature films and imports have spread across the schedules. Why is this?

The BBC has been desperately short of money throughout the 70s, but with the ITV companies financially buoyant and BBC-1 committed to full-blooded competition in the ratings war, the BBC has had to look for money elsewhere. Reliance on repeats, bought-in feature films and imported series has gone some way towards slowing the rate of the escalation of costs. The most significant response, however, has been to move more fully into co-productions and overseas sales. In 1978 almost ten per cent of BBC television's programme production budget was furnished from these sources, with £3 million from co-productions and roughly the same amount from profits on programme sales abroad.

Programme sales have always been a welcome source of extra income for the BBC, and indeed for ITV. For many years, however, the market was small and difficult to exploit. In addition to the predictable problems that arose in trying to sell programmes in non-English-speaking countries, it was difficult to penetrate the lucrative North American market. Partly this was due to the types of programmes on offer: the contemporary drama series and documentaries of the 60s were simply not attractive to the network chiefs in the United States. They did not 'travel' well.

This all changed with the success on public television in the United States of such costume drama series as *The Forsyte Saga* and *Upstairs, Downstairs*. British television programmes suddenly became a marketable commodity in the USA, not because they attracted large audiences but because they attracted the right kinds of audiences—the kinds that PR-minded sponsors such as the major oil corporations, Mobil and Exxon, were anxious to impress. The demand increased, money was available 'up-front' from such sponsors in exchange for distribution rights, and as Eric Paice has pointed out (*New Statesman*, 27 July 1979), the costume drama boom took off. There is an irony in this, because costume drama is very, very expensive (Paice reports that the wardrobe budget alone on a 50-minute episode is now over £12,000).

It was this easy availability of co-production funds that shifted the balance away from programme sales to pre-sales and co-productions. Despite the fact that the BBC is a public body, its profits are subject to corporation tax in the same way that a commercial company's profits would be. Thus, if a series is sold in the normal way to an American buyer, the BBC ends up paying the full production costs and the profits on

the sales are taxed. Where there is a co-production agreement, however, the production costs are shared and the distribution rights are given over to the co-producer in exchange for his investment. Thus, for example, the major BBC co-production *Life on Earth* cost around £1 million to produce, but co-production finance contributed £300,000 of the cost. The BBC is now in the somewhat unhappy position of seeing the series sell very well all around the world but unable to profit from it because the world rights were exchanged for a shortfall of £300,000 of the front money.

Pre-sales and co-productions have existed in British television since the 1950s, when the BBC was beginning to spread its sales wings in the world. Several mid-Atlantic cops and robbers series were made under such arrangements but proved to be disastrous in terms of audience reactions, both in Britain and in America. ATV, the Midlands commercial television contractor, has always been moderately heavily involved in making programmes for the international market, and indeed in the 60s their umbrella company, ITC, did rather better than the BBC, making attractive profits from a stable of adventure series such as *The Saint*, *The Avengers*, *The Persuaders*.

The first major co-production that attracted critical attention was *The British Empire* (1972), a BBC-Time-Life effort that was in many ways unique. Time-Life put up the front money and the whole project was set up in a special building at the BBC. Time-Life films, who now distribute BBC material in the USA, was not even in existence at the time; the deal was actually concluded with Time-Life Books, who were interested in 'ventilating' the subject of the British Empire since they were producing a part work on the same theme. The series was a flop in Britain and in the States, and much of the criticism attached

itself to the whole concept of co-productions. Why, it was asked, was the licence fee being used to make programmes for overseas consumption? It was argued that co-productions inevitably reduced the editorial integrity of the producer; the product, said the critics, had to fit the requirements of the target markets. The BBC replied to these criticisms by arguing that co-production partners were not allowed to interfere with the producer's intentions, that the programmes would have been made anyway, and that in any case most such deals were essentially pre-sales.

But do these arguments still apply? The BBC's financial difficulties over the past decade have produced a climate within the organisation which is becoming increasingly sensitive to market pressures. On the one hand there is the pressure to maintain the share of the national audience for the main channel, BBC-1. On the other hand, there is the need to ensure that a given programme will also attract not only buyers of the finished product from abroad, but also buyers of the programme *outlines*. This represents a critically important shift, for it is at the outline stage that co-production partners are brought in, and it is from that stage onwards that key decisions about artists, locations, budgets and scriptwriters are taken.

And there is no shortage of customers for British television output. It would be wrong to characterise the BBC Co-Production Department as a body that is actively seeking out partners, rather the reverse: they spend much of their time making up rules that make it impossible. There is a veritable flood of US dollars awaiting the opportunity to become involved in BBC co-productions, but American buyers complain vociferously that they cannot obtain the levels of co-operation that they would like.

Chris Higham of Metromedia Producers' Corporation, a major US TV producer, syndicator and station owner involved mainly in arts co-productions with the BBC (ballet and opera), was in January 1979 unsuccessfully seeking major properties aimed at the mass entertainment, peak time US audience (*Broadcast* magazine, 22 January 1979). He was interested in 'cerebral thrillers' (the British are good at these, apparently) and was looking for producers who could come up with adaptations of novels by Agatha Christie, Len Deighton and John Le Carré (on whose book *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* the BBC/Paramount mini-series was based). Four or six part dramatisations or 90-120 minute films were preferred. However, Mr. Higham had problems: 'Independent producers have shown some recognition of the needs and possibilities of the US Prime Time

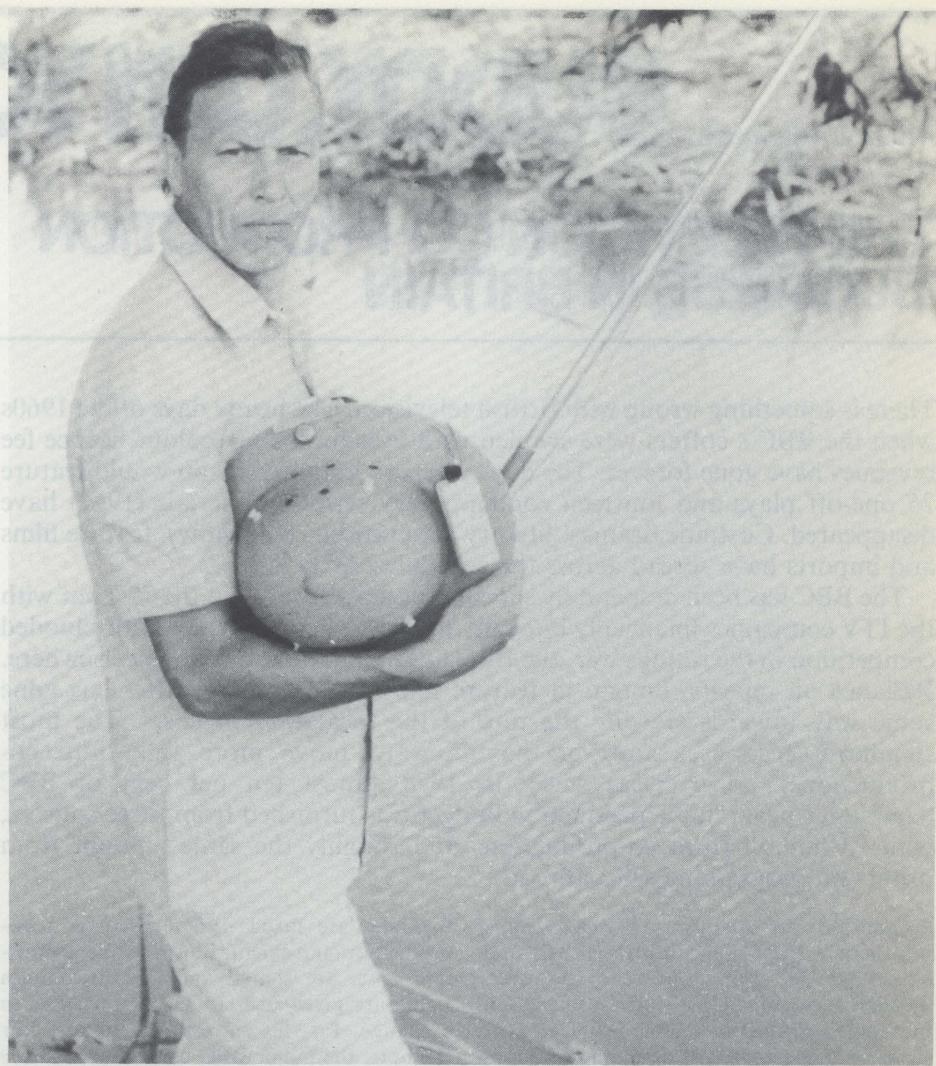
market, but the BBC and the ITV companies have been more reluctant. Certainly their duty is to the home market, but you mustn't infer that high-quality series aimed at the US necessarily compromises this.' (*Broadcast*, 22 January 1979)

What, then, was Metromedia offering? Mr. Higham was candid: 'Pre-planning, the assessment of the market, the pacing, the casting and promotion of the production are essential in any assault of the US market, which is where Metromedia come in. Funding for the right project is not a problem.'

So, if Metromedia and their ilk are being kept at arm's length, perhaps those critics of co-productions who argue that the initiative for television productions is passing from the production departments to the marketing men are wrong. In fact, the situation is rather more complex.

Programme producers are themselves keen to get their hands on the large budgets that co-production deals make possible. This is particularly so in those parts of the BBC (the regions) that are especially hard hit by economies: *Life on Earth* was a BBC-Bristol co-production. It is also true of the smaller ITV companies: Anglia Television's wildlife series *Survival* (never has a series been so aptly named) depends on J. Walter Thompson's beneficent interest in the preservation of rare species and corporate image alike; and the same company's series of Roald Dahl short story dramatisations *Tales of the Unexpected* (six, all on film) was produced thanks to the biggest pre-sale deal ever concluded by a small contractor. HTV, the Wales and the West commercial contractor, concluded a Franco-German co-production deal for their dramatisation of R. L. Stevenson's *Kidnapped*; the casting of previously unheard of German and French actors adding to the excitement caused to the viewer by disastrous lip-sync dubbing.

The ITV majors, never reluctant to accept profit hikes, have also developed a keen interest in servicing the requirements of the US market: LWT's programme about television, *Look Here*, disclosed in June 1979 that Granada Television's adaptation of Dickens' *Hard Times* was budgeted at £1 million, with co-production funds coming from Exxon Oil Corporation, the National Endowment for the Humanities and WNET. The budget for Granada's co-production of Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited* was even higher: £1.5 million, shared among Exxon, WNET and Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR). Mobil Oil's co-production supremo, Herb Schmirtz, dubbed 'the most important man in British television' by some, has underwritten the production costs of London Weekend's dramatisation of Agatha Christie's thriller *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?* with the biggest sum of money ever paid for a drama production by a US buyer. The companies have so arranged such deals that they obtain considerable indirect financial advantage: film production costs, if budgeted in advance, can be classified as investments and thereby offset against corporation tax. It is also possible to use funds that would normally be lost to the levy on ITV companies' profits.



Co-production favourites: the natural history series and the 'cerebral' thriller. 'Life on Earth': David Attenborough in Guyana. 'Malice Aforethought': Hywel Bennett in the BBC dramatisation of Francis Iles' novel

Southern Television, in setting up its subsidiary company Southern Pictures in February 1979, is making the most of the existing tax laws and levy arrangements and thus creating extra resources. Interestingly, Southern Pictures' productions are to be available to all comers 'including the BBC', according to their Creative Director, Mark Shivas. Offers of productions to the ITV network are made not by the usual 'early warning' procedure to the Network Programme Controllers' meetings, but via ITV's film purchasing consortium.

ATV's Black Lion Films, on the other hand, is producing films aimed specifically at the UK audience (contracts are coming up for renewal in 1981, such renewals usually leading to simultaneous renewals of interest in 'British' programming), though, as Managing Director Charles Denton modestly admitted, 'The quality of the production will sell them abroad, but that's not what they're designed for.' (*Broadcast*, 12 February 1979.)

The ever-expanding independent production sector is reputedly very accessible to co-producers, and this area of activity is set for extremely rapid growth with the coming of the fourth television channel in Britain in 1982.

The BBC's dependence on international sales and co-production funds is increasing and should not be underestimated, even if the licence fee arrangements are improved in the near future. Time-Life Films, the BBC's US distributor, has set up over 200 hours-worth of co-production deals over the next five or six years (*Broadcast*, 11 June 1979). Those already in production or completed include the 37-part Shakespeare cycle (backed by Morgan Guaranty Trust, Exxon Oil and Metropolitan Life Assurance Association), *Plain Murder, Malice Aforethought, Rebecca, The Voyage of Charles Darwin, A Horseman Riding By, Crime and Punishment, The Duchess of Duke Street II, Wuthering Heights, Oresteia*, and the ill-fated *Nancy Astor* (aborted reputedly because of casting difficulties over the use of foreign actors, but at £250,000 per episode an expensive risk that the BBC might well have been glad to relieve themselves of), funded variously by Exxon Oil, Mobil Oil, American Telegraph and Telephone Co. (AT&T) and McDonald's Hamburgers for screening on PBS. McDonald's is also to co-produce with the BBC several mini-series and classic dramatisations, including *The Old Curiosity Shop, King Arthur, A Tale of Two Cities and Pinocchio*. Other BBC co-productions with US partners include a dramatisation of a romantic novel (Susan Howatch's *Penmarric*), an anthropological series (*The Search for Man*) and two arts series (*All the World's a Stage* and *The Shock of the New*).

So the dependence on co-production finance for peak time domestically produced programmes in the areas of costume drama, the arts, natural history and popular science and literary adaptations is increasingly marked. And whilst the BBC and ITV companies may put their hands on their hearts and say that the programmes are made for British audiences first and foremost, that they deserve a wider audience and that bigger budgets mean better quality and therefore better value for the British viewer, there is a clearly perceptible trend towards the greater involvement of marketing and sales staff within the broadcasting organisations in

programme planning, casting, selection of writers and, most importantly, the focusing of attention on particular constellations of form and content (period dramas, mini-series, 90 to 120-minute films).

For many years the sales of BBC programmes were handled by a specialised department, BBC Enterprises. While this department was in control of co-productions in the 50s and 60s, the specific responsibility for the fixing of co-production deals was hived off to a new unit in the Programme Acquisitions Department based at Shepherd's Bush Green in London. BBC Enterprises then occupied itself with the not unprofitable business of selling completed BBC productions overseas, among other activities. There were some problems, though. The profits were subject to corporation tax, and were simply put back into the BBC's general revenue account. Now the profits from sales are fed directly back into programme production, greatly easing the relationship between producers and salesmen: producers who were formerly unconcerned about the fate of their output in the world market-place are now far more conscious of its overseas earning potential. The tax problem was offset through the expedient of establishing BBC Enterprises as a limited company on 1 June 1979. It is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of the BBC, enabling it to be more competitive in the marketplace and freer of BBC pressures.

BBC Enterprises Ltd. is the beginning of a new commercial group with wider scope to diversify into new growth areas such as home video, pay-TV, cable and film stock sales. It now has its own internal accounting, of course, and can make its own forecasts. The most important area of new activity, however, is Enterprises' co-production work. In August 1979 it was announced that BBC Enterprises Ltd. had earmarked a proportion of its expected profits in the forthcoming year to finance co-production deals with the BBC. A new marketing unit headed by Peter Saxton was set up, the aim being that Saxton should recommend to Roy Gibb, the Head of Programme Sales, the sorts of programmes that would be likely to achieve the best sales overseas. £4 million was earmarked for such co-productions, the whole sum being set against corporation tax on profits under the system outlined earlier.

So now BBC Enterprises Ltd. has a dual role: it is an agent for the sale of BBC programmes abroad, and it is a co-production partner with excellent connections. These connections extend in two directions: not only does Enterprises have first-class links with overseas markets, it also has increasingly close relations with producers and production departments within the BBC. Peter Lord, Sales Manager at BBC Enterprises Ltd., sees this as a useful development, as he told me in an interview last October:

'Our salesmen have a legitimate interest in programme production. We might say that in order to make a given programme more acceptable overseas, we'd like this element and that element. We get considerable advance information on programmes, and we express an opinion on which might be saleable. They're only pieces of paper at that stage, but close to the start of production one or two big series might stand out and under the new arrangements we can enter a

competitive bid. This means that we can exploit the overseas rights ourselves. It's a difficult balance between the salesman and the producer, but I foresee that within three years we will be much more closely in with the production departments; we'll be in at the planning stage. At one time we never took an interest in a programme until it was actually made, then we'd try to sell it. Now we hear about things when they are working titles. We're in constant touch all the time, and they're now much more willing to listen to us.'

So whilst the demands of the major US networks for detailed involvement in the planning of co-productions are rebuffed, and whilst co-producers like Metromedia are held at arm's length, the BBC's own international sales wing is being granted a bigger say in programme planning and production. Financially the arrangements make a great deal of sense, but the impact of such activities on the prime time schedules is, on the basis of recent performance, somewhat depressing.

The cross-cultural appeal of natural history series, costume drama series and adaptations of classic novels is well established, but is the British viewer getting what he or she wants? An audience of five million is considered to be good going for an adaptation these days, but as TV scriptwriter Eric Paice points out (*New Statesman*, 27 July 1979), single plays used to attract audiences of twelve to fifteen million. And the average Audience Appreciation index has fallen gradually for the past twenty years, and continues to fall (from an average of 64/100 in the range +100 to -100 to only 37/100 in June 1978)*.

The dominant trend in British television drama is towards romantic escapism, a trend which looks set to continue, at least until scriptwriters run out of classic novels suitable for adaptation. Programmes about the Britain of today are fast disappearing. The money is simply not available for contemporary drama.

It is very likely that in ten or twenty years time when we look back on the present trend we will see it with far more clarity than we can today. It may be that we are witnessing the death throes of our national monopoly broadcasting system. On the one hand, broadcasting is becoming internationalised, seeking its audience in many countries simply in order to pay the bills. On the other hand, electronic media users are becoming more differentiated, the mass audience is declining and technological developments such as videodiscs, teletext, interactive cable systems and direct broadcast satellites are opening up totally new possibilities for electronic communication. The present obsession of channel controllers with nostalgia may be the last refuge of a system unwilling to acknowledge the approaching revolution.

But a serious question remains. The BBC's Charter and the IBA Act specifically preclude programme sponsorship and clearly state that editorial responsibility must remain in their hands. How long can the BBC and the ITV companies go on asserting that co-productions do not represent a contravention, if not of the letter, then of the spirit, of their statutory obligations?

* Jay Blumler, 'The Future of the Mass Audience: Decline Amidst Plenty', *Intermedia*, 6, 1978. pp. 13-14.



Film Reviews

Radio On

In the final sequence of *Radio On* (BFI), the hero at long last makes a connection—although it is one that seems to have little to do with the perfunctory narrative reasons for his being there in the first place. Abandoning his unreliable two-tone Rover—perched, its doors ajar, like some pathetically grounded bird, on the lip of a quarry—Robert B. (David Beames) walks along a West Somerset seashore before diving across the tracks at a deserted railway station just ahead of the train that then spirits him away behind the closing credits. The connection, one might assume, is a little joke: trains have occasionally shadowed Robert during his inconclusive trip from London to Bristol, and their significance seems to be the most direct reference to the work of the film's associate producer Wim Wenders, whom Christopher Petit (the *Time Out* critic here making his first film as writer-director) has acknowledged as a crucial influence.

Trains might also seem a curiously obsolete fetish for latter-day exponents of the road movie such as Wenders and now Petit. One can see their attraction, however, for the undecided heroes of these films: they follow a predetermined path to a certain destination. In *Radio On*, although the final sequence is quite a satisfying narrative conclusion to the steadily winding-down odyssey we have witnessed, they function primarily as poetic motifs, of an ironic nature, and in this signal the film's essential difference from Wim Wenders. There is a consistent thematic development about Wenders' travellers' tales, intertwined psychological, philosophical and cinematic concerns in his adaptation of an American staple (the road movie/buddy movie cycle) to the 'new' Germany. *Kings of the Road* parallels the bankruptcy of that kind of exclusive male relationship with the bankruptcy of language in general and cinema in particular—and this in the context of the two lead characters' journey back into their past, in an attempt to find some alternative road to travel down.

Although *Radio On* takes in some of the same territory—it remains quite conscious of being an English version of a German adaptation of an American model—it is also steadfastly detached from the hero and his quest. Wenders' digressions finally bring him closer to his protagonists and the necessity of their journey; *Radio On* is never that committed from the start to what its hero sets out to do, and digression becomes an end in itself. What is finally clinched by that departure by train is not merely a predictable *hommage* but an odd sense that the narrative has all along been teasingly holding out to the hero just such an escape from the demands (for action, the resolution of ambiguity) that it has itself created. Hence the running comedy of missed connections up to that point: at a loose end in Bristol, Robert is refused admission to a disco called 'Platform One', and then goes on to pick up two German girls, who are puzzling over whether or not they have missed the last train.

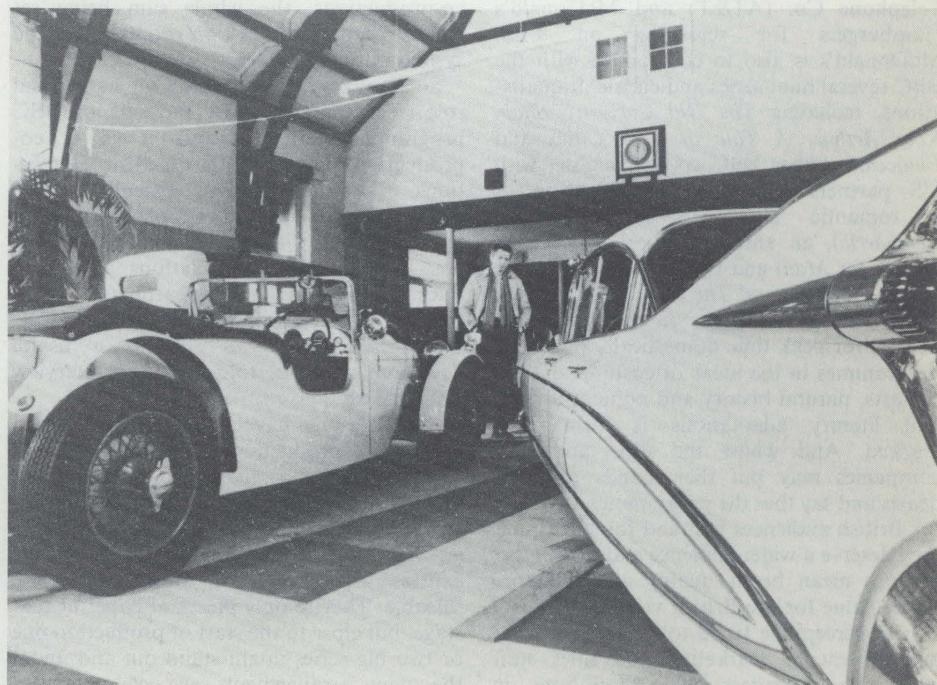
Admittedly, the business of actually getting the hero under way sets up a few false expectations, and such exposition as there is intrudes awkwardly, despite its being pushed literally off-screen. Robert at the beginning is followed in a glum routine from local launderette to the flat (above a cinema in London's Camden Town) he shares with a Welsh girl (Sue Jones-Davies), with whom communica-

tions—if they ever existed—have broken down, and thence to his job as a night-time disc jockey playing workers' requests in a biscuit factory. The isolation of his broadcasting booth, the flickering emptiness of not just one but a whole bank of TV sets in his flat, and the cocooned environment of his car—a reassuring wash of rock music inside, the rather obviously dissociated glimpses of the landscape outside—all conjure a movie mood that suggests the Alienated Hero may be on the point of a comeback.

Returning home one morning, Robert gets a phone call from his mother, and though he wanders off-screen for the following exchange of information, and as perfunctory as that proves to be, there is a nagging sense of dramatic inadequacy about the scene. His brother, who has recently sent Robert a packet of tapes for his birthday, has been found dead in his bath in Bristol; Robert promises to drive down to see what has happened. Radio reports of a police crackdown on a ring of pornographers in the West Country, interspersed with more usual news of violence in Germany and Ireland, begin to acquire a special significance—though this is and remains purely circumstantial. After more aimless mooning, Robert prepares to hit the road by getting his hair cut: 'Ten years ago you had to fight not to get it all cut off. Now they want to leave it all on.'

From this point, *Radio On* gains in confidence, not because the movement leads to anything more positive in the way of action, but because it releases the film to explore something of the culture behind the aptly inexpressive face of its hero. 'We are the children of Fritz Lang and Werner von Braun. We are the link between the 20s and the 80s. All change in society passes through a sympathetic collaboration with tape-recorders, synthesizers and telephones. Our reality is an electronic reality'—this

'Radio On': David Beames



declaration by the German group Kraftwerk is pinned up in the flat where Robert's brother lies dead, probed by the camera in the meandering, hand-held opening shot. Kraftwerk's 'Ohm Sweet Ohm' rasps in eerie, sardonic lament from the Rover that Robert drives to its final, cliff-hanging resting place; their 'Radioactivity' and Devo's rendition of 'Satisfaction' lend further credibility to the electronic reality to which, for the moment, Robert has surrendered all his options. With a kind of unemphatic poetry, Martin Schäfer's photography follows suit. This road movie is a collection not so much of places as of neon: from the film's title flashing round the Bristol Hippodrome, to the homely magic of detached high-angle shots of Camden at night, to a whole array of signs, juke boxes and pinball machines.

David Bowie's bilingual 'Heroes/Helden' behind the opening shot signals another aspect of that reality—in the way that the verbal non-communication of the first half of the film becomes a doleful kind of Babel (in token, as it were) in the second. On Robert's side, the language barrier that separates him from the German girl, Ingrid (Lisa Kreuzer), he befriends seems to represent some lost opportunity, as his efforts to sympathise in her search for a misplaced daughter and even to attempt intimacy become a wistful trading of phrasebook expressions. On hers, a more traumatic splitting is involved: her daughter has been taken away by the girl's father, a German businessman who works in England, where he also has an aunt, a woman who came from Germany as a refugee and with whom Ingrid spends a fruitless afternoon trying (half in English, half in German) to discover her daughter's whereabouts. That the girl is called Alice, and Lisa Kreuzer's presence in itself, mean that this part of the film is virtually defined through Wenders' spectral influence. But given the latter's preoccupation with national borders as a metaphor for other boundaries, that is appropriate enough.

The German connection—the war, the reports from the radio of terrorist activity—also conjures the violence that is part of any contemporary reality. The other half of which, at least in the British context and in terms of the news broadcasts, is Ireland, made manifest in an army deserter to whom Robert at one point gives a lift and then abandons when he is discomforted by the man's barely repressed violence. Given the kind of genre to which it loosely refers, it is also fitting that *Radio On* should invoke a tradition of cathartic American violence, if only to indicate that its pacifist, if not thoroughly wasted hero is unlikely to seek resolution in that direction. Robert getting his hair

cut before his big trip is reminiscent of Travis Bickle preparing for action in *Taxi Driver*. And having failed in his mission to learn anything about his brother, finally not bothering even to push his investigation very far, Robert is involved in an incident in a pub—he is kicked off his stool by an irate woman snooker player—that might be the feminist revenge on those macho movie types to whom Robert doesn't belong, or simply the barroom brawl that doesn't happen.

For all its German and American antecedents, however, *Radio On* remains peculiarly English in its concerns and atmosphere. It is in fact one of the most distinguished attempts by a native film-maker to contain all those influences and emerge with a firm sense of its own identity. This is obvious enough in the skein of local references—the Bristol Hippodrome; Robert's conversation at a desolate petrol station with an attendant aspiring to the mantle of Eddie Cochran, who died in a road accident on his way back from the Hippodrome in 1960—but in terms of style, is most persuasively and unexpectedly asserted when both hero and story seem at the end of their resources. As Robert approaches the railway station at the end, the lowering sky over the beach, the deserted, wind-swept platform and the gabled station house with its mournfully swinging sign conjure something like *Jamaica Inn*, and the brooding introspection of English Gothic.

RICHARD COMBS

Love on the Run

A man in his early thirties, that day finally divorced, takes his son to the station to send him off on a school camping holiday. In order to carry out this assignment he has had to give up a date with his latest girl friend. From a train standing at the opposite platform a beautiful woman (perhaps a girl still?) smiles and waves her recognition: she flaps a copy of the young man's only published novel, called *Les Salades d'Amour*. He is exquisitely flattered. He turns to his son with a parting word of advice: 'Always be nice to girls.' The trains draw out of the station simultaneously. He hesitates a moment and, like a twentieth century D'Artagnan, he leaps aboard the train containing the girl who is reading his novel. Antoine Doinel is in flight.

With the important exception of *Stolen Kisses*, the saga of this young man's love life through three and a half films is, to me, the least appealing of François Truffaut's glorious output. There's an occasional coyness; an indulgence of the actor Jean-Pierre Léaud who plays Antoine, which jars. The director loses some of his magic when faced with his alter ego—one notices how much better Léaud was as the outrageously egoistic film star in *Day for Night* than he is as the marginally less selfish Doinel. (I altogether except the early masterpiece, *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, where the Truffaut/Léaud/Doinel figure is shown with unparalleled comic tenderness and honesty.) Perhaps the fact that the series has strayed from direct autobiography may account for the relative thinness of the later films. But, all seen and done, Truffaut's thinness is like a gigantic tapestry where a thousand details delight even if the colours and the texture have, as it were, dimmed.

Love on the Run (Gala), said to be the last of the series, has individual scenes which no other director in the history of the cinema could achieve with such elegant, heart-stopping, comic authority. He also uses flashbacks from the previous films with an exemplary tact and skill. Antoine has been through a lot since he stared out at us, without accusation or pity, in the last, famous frozen frames of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. The moment when cinema changed. There's a shot of him in the new movie tearing down a parapet, as one of his girls says, with exasperated wryness: 'He's always running—he hasn't changed.'

This is true of Doinel, but not of Truffaut. Doinel has married, had a son, chased innumerable girls, published one novel and held down his job as a proof-reader in a printing press; meanwhile his



'Love on the Run': Jean-Pierre Léaud, Dorothée

creator has directed some twenty films, the majority of them masterpieces. The gap in achievement, and by implication in imagination, is perilously large. For all the tenderness and objectivity which Truffaut allows his hero, Doinel remains little more than a posturing, skirt-chasing, pretentious man—a nightmare Parisian whose arrogance is coated in self-pity. Nor, curiously, does he show any of the conventionally neurotic signs of a child who has suffered in the way we saw in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. His only insecurity seems to be the highly conventional one of possessing a well developed libido. He is bourgeois through and through; on the evidence of his majestically humane and varied films, Truffaut is not like that.

The girls in the new movie are as terrific as ever—all of them prettier now than they were in their original manifestations. There is the Colette of Marie-France Pisier, who is also, unsurprisingly, credited with co-writing the script; there's clearly high intelligence inside her voluptuous gaiety. Claude Jade's Christine now has some of the cool sweetness of Delphine Seyrig in *Stolen Kisses*. (Alas, the superlative Mlle. Seyrig is not among the girls who turn up again here.) And Dani, as Liliiane, is as sexy as Silvana Mangano in *Bitter Rice*—in fact she looks very like her. The newcomer to the budding grove is Dorothée, who plays Doinel's latest love, Sabine. She is a characteristically happy dream Parisienne—practical, romantic, kind, independent and very pretty too. One does pause to wonder quite how Antoine Doinel manages to gather such a gallery of lovelies round him, for his sex appeal isn't all that apparent.

The plot is of a complexity which defies résumé. Suffice it to say that Antoine has discovered Sabine by piecing together a photograph of her which he has found after seeing a man tear it up in a frenzy of rage whilst telephoning in a kiosk. This act, and the attempt to find Sabine, is to be the plot of his new novel (which he assures Colette is not at all autobiographical!). The themes are more easily identified. Doinel is maturing emotionally; we are to believe that perhaps the final winning of Sabine indicates that he will settle down. The flight is meant to be over. He is no longer on the run—though the criminal overtones in the English translation of the title *L'Amour en Fuite* are unfortunate: Truffaut never in any of his works equates love with crime, though in *Shoot the Pianist* and *The Siren of the Mississippi* he examines the connection between them.

This maturing is best exemplified in the most masterly scene in the film in which, by chance, he meets an old lover of his mother's, now grizzled and rheumy-eyed, who had once been responsible for

his greatest suffering years ago. They have a quick lunch together—significantly paying their own shares—whilst M. Lucien, the old lover, in a gloriously understated performance by Julien Bertheau, speaks of Antoine's mother with a sort of agitated nostalgia. Antoine, he insists, had never known her goodness, her love for them both. Antoine had not been to her funeral and has to admit that he has never visited her grave. M. Lucien is aghast: 'But she is buried next to Marguerite Gautier—the heroine of Dumas' *Camille*.' It is Doinel's turn to be surprised. 'But she was an invention. The heroine of a novel,' he says.

In the scene which follows we see the grave of the mother, with its photographic icon topping the dates of her birth and death. Both lover and son are doubly reconciled. Beyond that the relationships between art and life, between fiction and autobiography, are established as unimportant. We never see the grave of Marguerite Gautier. We, the audience, may decide, if it interests us, whether the character on which Dumas based his cocotte is lying beside the late Madame Doinel.

There is evidence of this particular Truffaut-like trust in other scenes. Colette and Christine meet by chance in search of the new girl friend, Sabine. They are on the staircase of her apartment building, introduce themselves with hesitant politeness—and descend into light to sit on a park bench and at first tentatively, and finally torrentially, discuss and reminisce about the follies of loving Antoine. There is an atmosphere of delighted generosity which is wholly, mysteriously free of sentimentality and which could only be produced by this director. Truffaut may be full of invention and ideas, but he knows first things first—he understands love of any kind. He has a respect for it which many other considerable artists reserve exclusively for pain or ecstasy.

Over the years, in the hospitality of these pages, I have written quite a lot about the director I consider the greatest alive. He is the Mozart of film; a man whose work is so upliftingly, accurately surprising both on its ceaselessly charming surface and in its delicate depths, that criticism really seems futile. The fact that to my mind *Love on the Run* is not as perfect as some other works is like complaining that *La Clemenza di Tito* is not a masterpiece on the scale of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Or, to put it another way, and to quote Truffaut's cinematic (and spiritual) godfather, Jean Renoir, one doesn't like part of a man's work, one likes it, and that's that.



'Wise Blood': Brad Dourif

La Luna

As valid a test as any of a director's talent is how he shoots the moon. In his latest film Bertolucci employs it with surprising economy and discretion: no more than in a half-dozen shots, never crescent-shaped, never a neon sign of itself, never rhyming, as it were, with June. *La Luna* (Fox), in an exclusively climatic sense, is predominantly sunny in texture, with the moon viewed at first as a mere emblem, a logo, almost, of the genre to which, in spite of appearances, the film belongs: romantic melodrama. Or rather 'melodrama', as Bertolucci has himself termed it, from the Italian word for 'honey'. During the pre-credit sequence, as his mother, an American diva who has changed her name to Caterina for professional reasons (Jill Clayburgh), dances the Twist on the verandah of a Mediterranean villa, the child Joe smears his face with honey; later he is seen riding in a basket on her bicycle beneath the moon, making one think of 'honeymoon' or, in Italian, 'luna di miele'.

Other moons abound, however: the ball of wool in which the child entangles himself—one might again say 'smears' himself—as he toddles away from his mother, detaching himself from the orbit of her body for the first time. It reappears at the end when Joe revisits the villa in search of Giuseppe (Tomas Milian), whom he now knows to be his true father and whose arms are outstretched for his mother (Alida Valli) to wind the wool securely back into a tight little ball. There is the Count di Luna from *Trovatore* and 'Clair de Lune' on the piano. No less developed is the 'honey' theme, through Joe's addiction to heroin (signalled early on by his sniffling at table) and the wavering line he chalks along the walls as he wanders through Rome. Outside the womb, the film would seem to be saying, is a labyrinth into which man departs, for ever seeking re-entry; and *La Luna* describes the process by which Joe painfully rediscovers himself and, returning to the 'primal scene', unravels the moon.

Bertolucci, it is clear, can never wholly betray his post-Nouvelle Vague origins, as witness this need to furnish an authorised reading of the film as it unfolds. *La Luna* is both enriched by and encumbered with a metaphorical, referential apparatus, now fatuously 'cultural', as with the allusion to Debussy, now powerfully suggestive, as with the honey in the prologue. Added to which are numerous layers of personal and artistic autocitation: riding on his mother's bicycle is reportedly the director's own earliest memory of childhood; there is the obsession with Verdi,

familiar from *The Spider's Stratagem* and *1900*, and with Parma, which is where Caterina calls on her old voice coach.

On a more subtle level, *La Luna* is dialectically related to *Last Tango in Paris*, where two other alienated beings explored each other physically and psychically. The new film shifts from New York to Rome to Parma, from luxurious apartments to an open-air amphitheatre; but, fortified by the battery of signals and references, the token gestures towards Freud and Lacan, it soon acquires the claustrophobic, suitably incestuous atmosphere of *Last Tango*'s hothouse apartment. Though mother and son, Caterina and Joe form a real couple, constantly at each other's throats and crotches; and *La Luna* is, perhaps, the first film to portray incest, if not quite as a viable sexual alternative, then as comparable, in all its splendours and miseries, to any other union—for the purposes of dramaturgy, at least.

That it becomes so credible is in large part due to the extraordinary *rappoport* established between Jill Clayburgh and Mathew Barry as Joe. At the beginning Clayburgh strikes one as lacking in the kind of inner resources demanded by the role; but her feisty New York manner usefully undercuts the plot's more outrageous excesses, and when high Cs are called for—as in the scene where she herself, as it were, must spoonfeed Joe with heroin—she is more than capable of reaching them. (I refer to the 'operatic', not the literally operatic aspects of the film, which are less convincing due to a slight mismatching of dubbed singing voice and physique.) Barry, in an even trickier role—it is he rather than Clayburgh who is filmed as the object of desire—admirably conveys the character's alternating bouts of violence and tenderness.

In fact, the whole film advances by a series of abrupt changes in tone, unlike *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist*, which were basically linear narratives strained through a non-linear editing style. Since *La Luna* outwardly respects conventional chronology, it should be obvious that Bertolucci was not aiming for the kind of coherence to be gained by precise formal and psychological motivation. In one scene, for example, Caterina and Joe are driving through the countryside until brought to a sudden halt by a flat tyre, a minor mishap to which Joe reacts as if his mother had tried to kill him. She laboriously replaces the tyre but, as she is about to get into the car, Joe drives off. Whereupon, she is picked up by a passing motorist (Renato Salvatori) and driven to an inn, whose proprietor is inexplicably plying Joe with fine wines. After flirting with

her rescuer to arouse Joe's jealousy, she abruptly drops him and leads Joe into a back-room to make love. Needless to say, the scene ends with Joe quite brutally slapping her. Abruptly, inexplicably: throughout the film, the spectator is uneasily aware that anything may happen.

To a certain degree, of course, this kind of behaviour is a commonplace of modern cinema, where random slapping, say, or hysterical laughter has become almost the norm. But much of *La Luna* is played successfully for comedy, and all of it is aerated by the sheer grace of Bertolucci's *mise en scène*. Not only in the set-pieces—though the *Trovatore* sequence is the best of its kind since Susan Foster Kane's farewell débüt—but simply in the way he films a boy riding a skateboard, the closing of a door, the moon in the evening sky. In elegance, rapidity of execution and perfection of expression, Bertolucci is the cinema's Stendhal.

GILBERT ADAIR

Wise Blood

A young soldier back from overseas returns to the now derelict Tennessee farmhouse of his youth, then—as a down-home tune is picked out on the soundtrack—goes to stand over the family graves. The opening sequence of John Huston's *Wise Blood* (Artificial Eye) can hardly fail to summon up the cinema of John Ford, just as the interpolated memory flashback to the hellfire preaching of the boy's grandfather (played by the director) might genially belong to, say, *Steamboat Round the Bend*.

But Huston is slyly if magisterially practising a deception upon his audience. This background holds the wellsprings of poison: the grandfather proves an even more malign antecedent than was Huston's Noah Cross in *Chinatown*, and the boy himself, Hazel Motes (admirably played by Brad Dourif with no hint of false sympathy), is setting forth not merely—like the protagonists of many earlier Huston movies, *The Red Badge of Courage* being only the most obvious example—on an ironically observed odyssey toward self-knowledge, but on what he conceives to be a deliberate journey out of the self. 'I'm going to do some things I never have done before,' he stonily tells a fellow-passenger on the train taking him towards the bustling dingy city of Taulkinham. 'I ain't no goddam preacher,' he later proclaims to the mountaineous whore (a figure worthy of Fellini) in whose bed he spends his first night in the city. And in a deft (and also Felliniesque) shorthand flashback, shot through a lurid filter, Huston links Hazel's circus tent memories of his grandfather's jeremiads with the boy's first glimpse of sexuality in the shape of a carnival burlesque queen.

The movie now humorously relates Hazel's predicament to the eccentric ways of Taulkinham, a place where sidewalk vendors of kitchen implements invoke miracles and the traffic cop who upbraids Hazel for ignoring a red light does so in the manner of one preaching the gospel of road safety. With the scene set, Hazel—who is indeed, we learn, a preacher of sorts, as atheistic apostle of the one-member Church Without Christ—is launched forth in picaresque fashion to cross the paths of sundry hardly less bizarre figures. First there is Asa Hawks (Harry Dean Stanton, an actor of growing authority), street corner sermonist who ostensibly has blinded himself in demonstration of his belief, whose scarecrow daughter Hazel sets out to seduce in an act of vengeance for what Hawks represents. When it comes to seduction, however, the rapacious girl gets her clutches on Hazel, who later learns that her father is a mere charlatan.

A similar pattern of reversal occurs with Hoover Shoates (Ned Beatty), who is first seen emerging like a Mephistopheles from the darkness as Hazel attempts to spread his non-doctrine to a lacklustre gathering. Shoates, as a veteran of the 'Jesus business', perceives the commercial possibilities of Hazel's novelty and enthusiastically muscles in with a sales pitch and a dollar-bill collection. When Hazel furiously repudiates him, Shoates yells back that he

has no need of him; he merely needs his own front man and he can't get a prophet for peanuts'.

Then there is Enoch Emery, who lays claim to the mystic wise blood of the title, a friendless and harmlessly deluded youth who pays ritual obeisance to a mummified pygmy corpse in the local museum, an artefact which he tries to palm off on Hazel as the Messiah of the Church Without Christ. This subplot is the most substantial, though also the one that to some degree upsets the film's formal balance (so that as an independent work it fails to achieve the textual integration of *Fat City*). Perhaps, oddly enough, this is because Flannery O'Connor's remarkable source novel, which in many respects the screenplay has followed scrupulously, is able to treat Enoch at discursively greater length, whereas the briefer treatment afforded him in the movie paradoxically lends his connection to the story a literary overtone.

But allowing that the sequences depicting Enoch's fascination with the fake gorilla touted around town to publicise a jungle movie only tenuously illuminate the film's concern with atavism and free will, they link crucially with that continuing strain in Huston's work in which the degradation of the animal world comments upon the integrity of human affairs. In the same way that the relationship between Hazel and Enoch travesties the camaraderie celebrated in, most recently, *The Man Who Would Be King*, the dummy gorilla here, already presaged by a glimpse of a pathetic ape in the sleazy zoo where Enoch works, stands at the end of a line in which the wild horses in *The Misfits* are destined to become dog food and Judge Roy Bean's watch bear is killed defending its master against his epicene businessman adversary.

Within the episodic criss-crossing of *Wise Blood* springs of irony have been wound up, which the plot ultimately releases in a savage recoil. Enraged by the activities of Shoates' easily acquired substitute spokesman for the Church Without Christ, Hazel tracks down this inoffensive figure, by now the worse for drink, and proceeds to run him over; the man expires babbling a confession into Hazel's ear in grotesque confirmation of the latter's unwanted status as a man of God.

The jaws of the trap have still not quite closed. Hazel's instinct is to move on to another town, but in a quintessentially Hustonian melding of the ridiculous and the sublime he finds the way barred when his rattletrap car attracts the attention of a highway patrolman. Hazel has, almost literally, put his faith in this vehicle. 'Nobody with a good car needs to be justified,' he earlier sneers at Hawks. But the only car he can afford is anything but good; indeed, its propensity to fall to bits has provided, via the discreetly chopfallen reactions of successive garage-hands, a wry running joke which Huston has turned (with old-time Hollywood acumen) into a unifying device. The joke is conclusively capped as Hazel helplessly watches the officer shove the offending vehicle down an embankment. We share his view as it rolls away and, in an image which conjoins associations of burial and baptism, sinks to rest in a waiting pond.

In fittingly topsy-turvy fashion, this interrupted journey becomes Hazel's road to Damascus; simultaneously honouring the inversion of biblical lore which he has sought to propagate and adhering to the Old Testament eschatology by which he is imprisoned, he returns to his lodging house and blinds himself. His journey away from the self has led to negation, but even after the picaresque mode has been supplanted by the Gothic—the screams of Hawks' daughter ringing through the house as she discovers Hazel's act—irony persists. Hazel may endeavour to keep alive his godlessness through (anti-) religious acts of penitential mortification, but this is to little avail in the face of reality. His widowed landlady has designs upon him, which in the novel are strictly financial but which in the film take on an obscure sexual overtone. Wordlessly rejecting her proposal of matrimony—in the last of the movie's several unobtrusively virtuous long takes—the emaciated Hazel stumps out into a pouring rain which makes chillingly concrete the process of cleansing he has earlier spoken of.

The film's climactic sequence perhaps coinci-

dently recapitulates the memorable opening of *The Asphalt Jungle*, with its images of a police prowler car in the bleary dawn streets. The policemen discover the moribund Hazel lying collapsed on a waste lot, shake him conscious and sarcastically tell him he is wanted for not paying his rent. But what they carry back into the lodging house is revealed as a corpse. *Wise Blood* fades out on a dying fall that carries a heavyweight punch, and as the work of an old master but scarcely of an old man.

TIM PULLEINE

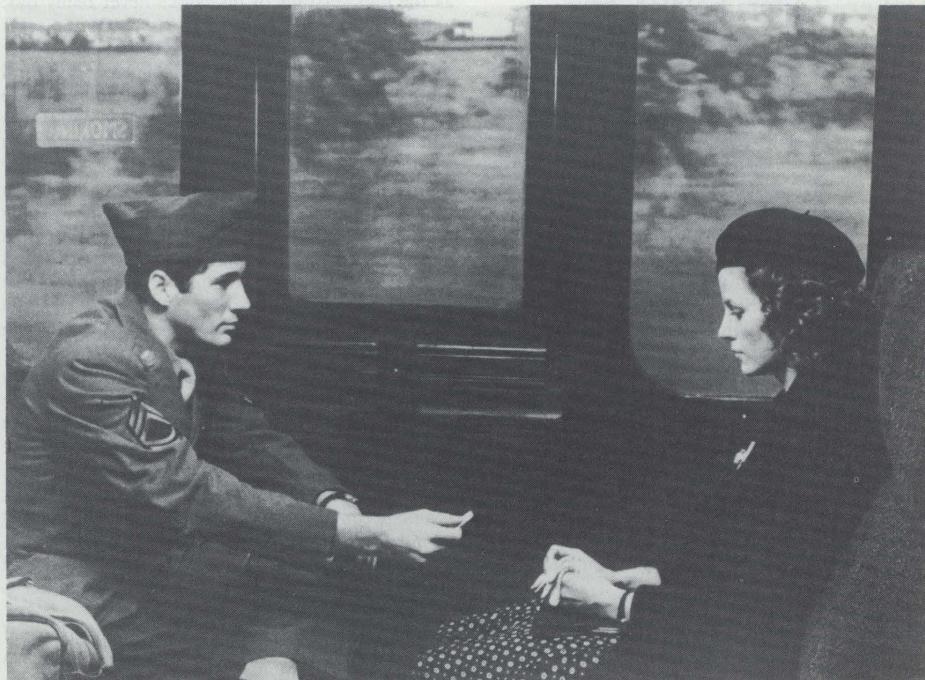
Yanks

Why shouldn't *Yanks* be a film that Mitchell Leisen could have made in the 40s? Why not be gratified to see John Schlesinger coming close to that degree of craft? It knows it's sentimental, and a Leisen would have blushed at its length. But there's a capacity for kindness and human observation that waits patiently for a handful of scenes in which good BBC writing (by Colin Welland) and exceptional acting lay hands on a modern screen rarity, ordinary feeling.

Yanks (United Artists) is so much better than I expected that I hope I don't overrate it—a very appropriate, English reaction. Above all, one marvels that no one thought of this begging subject before. The vision of heavy US Army transport moving gingerly along the misty narrows of English roads is at once tender and ominous. It hooks us before we appreciate all the other opportunities for cross-cultural hostilities in a common but unshared language. Viewing it from America, that sub-text is more impressive than the romance or the nostalgia. It may only be half grasped, but there is a portrait here of the awkward, envious affection that has troubled Britain and America since the war.

One of the three love stories is so perfunctory a concession to the working class that it should have been scrapped. But the other two are richer and more satisfying. Richard Gere is a kid from Tucson who falls for a shopkeeper's daughter (Lisa Eichhorn). William Devane is a married officer who has a courteous, helpful-around-the-house affair with the lady of the run-down manor (Vanessa Redgrave) whose husband is away at sea. In both these stories, the characters are trapped by their heritage and horizons, thinking wistfully of taking risks, but obedient to the burdens they bear that have taken on extra gravity because in war they are part of the fabric that is being fought for. Not that there is any jingoism. The war's influence is the more subtle because the combat is still remote, a legend in newsreels at the town cinema.

'Yanks': Richard Gere and Lisa Eichhorn



Yanks explores different codes of responsibility and fulfilment striving to be allies. It shows Americans swept along by the pursuit of happiness, and the English content to make a bitter best of things. Yet when racism spoils a dance, revealing a blind spot in the expansive American dream, it is an English gesture of civility—not idealism or liberalism—that proclaims another aspiration, less intense but more genteel. The value of that scene is in never hiding English racism, but recognising the deceptiveness of good manners.

Richard Gere's floppy-faced sensuality seems made for a romantic hero. But the downcast, repressed face that Lisa Eichhorn has learned to wear is much more passionate. Gere is the outline of an innocent, amiable and rather shallow Westerner who spreads goodwill around him as a nervous habit. He hardly knows he's set off a demanding need in a woman who is tempted by the easy way he claims anything is possible. When she gives herself to him, she is more than he knows how to accept. She manages in her tidy mind to separate the American from the dull, decent English soldier she is half-engaged to who is the young version of her drained, apologetic father. The Englishman is killed in Burma, and there is a remarkable scene when Eichhorn and Gere come happily home to find her parents in mourning. She smiles in a mad mix of agony, relief and coincidence at the news: it is a measure of her powerful, deep currents. The mother duly unloads guilt on the couple but the daughter refuses to bear it. Her independence shocks her mother, who foresees with dread that her grandchildren will live in Arizona. With that disclosure of layers of worry, *Yanks* can be seen as another movie about American immigrants, those bold enough to venture forth and those who could never take the risk.

The other relationship is better written and better acted. Devane and Redgrave are both restrained by the impossibility of their affair. Because its limits are taken for granted, so their desire wells up more strongly behind guarded faces. Devane guesses that mere absence will collapse his American marriage; but he understands that Redgrave's situation is fixed by the house, her duty, the servants, and the unhappy adolescent son who is sent away to a boarding school he loathes. Devane thinks the boy should be spared the school—it threatens his freedom. Redgrave knows that that decision would injure her husband's sense of tradition. The son may be damaged, but who ever thought that love and its toll of consequences did not warp sometimes?

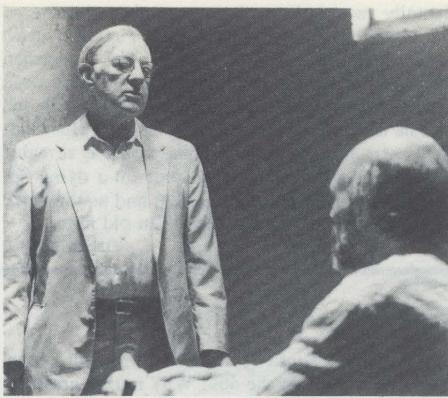
The Americans go off to war. The audience is left

in not much doubt that Gere will return adult enough to deserve Eichhorn—the finale is a sumptuously orchestrated railway station departure carefully assembled and surprisingly uninhibited. *Yanks* saves face with the undeflected pain and loss in the other love story. Devane and Redgrave arrange a hotel tryst, but she is stopped on the brink by the exquisite, casual and enigmatic sight of another couple on a hotel balcony, the woman hanging her stockings out to dry. John Schlesinger has never done anything as touching, natural or well worked out in screen space before, and how many films are there today that can treat effacing self-sacrifice without a threnody of strings and lockjaw ennoblement?

The hotel and the stockings are part of the texture of *Yanks*, so meticulous that the human stories have to live up to the background. Dick Bush's colour is too rich; there is too much soft focus. Wartime England should look leaner. But place and decor build up our trust and pleasure. There is the shop, with its gloomy back parlour, the ration books and the magical oranges that arrive one day. There is the church where an amateur orchestra plays and bicycles are propped against the gravestones outside. The buses, the cinema and the dance hall are all as intact as the reproachful faces in the small north country town.

Stars clash with such authenticity. The school of *Z Cars* that bred Welland wanted to do without them. But there are starry performances here, which hark back to the 40s. It astonishes me that Lisa Eichhorn is American. Her dying-fall accent is flawlessly ingrown, and she never jars in a household that includes Rachel Roberts and Tony Melody. Eichhorn is so good you have to watch her closely, and so able to move from turmoil to calm in an instant that you are reminded of Margaret Sullavan. Then there is Vanessa Redgrave. She is ageing, with that brisk disregard for glamour that alone can surmount age and find clarity of personality. But she is beautiful still in her rendering of a whole woman in details like her crouch over a resisting cello, her glee with the new toy of a fruit machine or her anguish at her son's distress. She is so thorough and extensive a presence that you want to read the novel that could amplify all the hints you see on the screen. Vanessa Redgrave could play Mrs Dalloway at the moment. If the world wants to reward her for the sham liberal piety of *Julia* and pass over this, then the world is an ass. There are moments in *Yanks* looking at Redgrave when you realise with wonder the movie novelty of middle-aged radiance.

DAVID THOMSON



'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy': flashback to Smiley's meeting with Karla (Patrick Stewart)

no means the easiest of authors to adapt. The cinema has not done particularly well by him. Sidney Lumet made a fair shot at his early novel *A Call for the Dead (The Deadly Affair)*, but Martin Ritt's version of *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* was on the stodgy and lugubrious side, and *The Looking Glass War*, a novel of middle-aged duplicity, illusion and betrayal, foundered on a nervously swinging cinema's notion that screen heroes had to be young. *A Small Town in Germany*, which seems to me the best of Le Carré's books, less weighted and solemn than *Tinker, Tailor* and *The Honourable Schoolboy*, was announced for filming but never made. It, too, would present problems.

Le Carré is no more a naturalistic writer than, say, Raymond Chandler. He creates a parallel world with its rules and jargon (the moles and lamplighters and juju men), as self-contained as Chandler's California and similarly defined essentially in terms of a style and an attitude. Le Carré's world happens to be that of the secret service, at once apart from public experience and a focus of endless curiosity, and his plot is the quintessential post-war spy story, which as we all know is about betrayal, the fourth and fifth men, the double agent and the double game. This, of course, lends verisimilitude to artifice. But if this world and this sort of plot had not so evidently existed, one feels that Le Carré would still have needed to invent them, to accommodate an awareness of public and private betrayal second only to Graham Greene's. Le Carré's intelligence world may seem 'real', but then so does Len Deighton's; and in effect they are poles apart—public school, one might say, against comprehensive.

The TV *Tinker, Tailor* confronts Le Carré's style, as the film versions of his books never really did; and if the solutions on screen sometimes seem obfuscating and mannered, that is not necessarily untrue to the book, which achieves grip and authority through a labyrinth of technique. The story as such, of the suspected traitor within the Circus, the machinations of the dying Control (a somewhat manic performance by Alexander Knox), and Smiley's burrowing hunt back through the files and other people's memories for the deeply buried mole, is not really all that complex. The impression of wheels within wheels and plots within plots is largely in the manner of the telling. The series' technique was to alternate basically static dialogue episodes with clusters of scene-setting shots (like the obvious but apt backgrounds for Ricki Tarr's Portuguese escapade with his forlorn Russian lady). In the first episode, Smiley and the faithful Guillam are parked in a layby, the pause in itself being a device to break what would otherwise be a monotonous dialogue scene in a moving car. Parked in front of them, on a dark, damp evening, is a huge container truck, its indicator light flashing a kind of meaningless, insistent threat into the night. Such an effect signals a style: an emphatic visual emphasis, beautifully irrelevant, in a work that is going to take its time.

And time—or the use of dramatic time—is one of the intriguing aspects of the series drama as a format. *Tinker, Tailor* runs, all told, for some six

hours of screen time, or about three times as long as a standard cinema adaptation. No one could pretend that you actually *need* six hours to adapt a novel, however circumlocutory its plot, or that the dramatic form which requires such a time-span is not almost by its nature overstretched. A cinema film compresses, elides, and in all probability produces a far more telling sense of place. Television, at once more expansive and more cramped, has to shape each of its separate episodes into some coherence and to look for its own different continuity. Given six hours to play with, *Tinker, Tailor* still lost most of the places and some of the people: Mendel, the policeman aide, is much reduced, and the four suspects themselves are in the early episodes almost faceless men. Even in an acute and conscientious adaptation, the format can seem wasteful; but the continuity of concentration, the logical one for a medium shaped to personality, is through the central performance. Just as audiences switch on for newscasters or chat show hosts, so they switch on for Alec Guinness, mastermind in action.

The slow, controlled voice, the hunched shoulders and sagging cheeks, the weary eyes behind the spectacles, the suggestion that the man asking the questions already knows the answers: in Guinness' hands, any interrogation becomes a confessional. Minor characters, from Beryl Reid's old Circus war-horse, put drunkenly out to grass in Oxford, to Jerry Westerby, the honourable schoolboy of Le Carré's later novel, here providing a scrap of evidence over busy forkfuls of lunch, can be safely encouraged to overplay. Mannered eccentricity, heightened by lighting and insistent close-up, throws into relief Guinness' masterly inactivity. Smiley, the spoiled priest of the Circus, creates the mood that goes beyond the thriller plot.

Certainly, this kind of stylisation is not the common currency of the TV series. Critical reaction to it brings into question some of the arguments about television 'naturalism', so often denounced in theory but so much looked for in practice that any departure from it invites querulousness. The last episode is compelling: Haydon, the mole, finally unearthed, and waiting to be shipped off to his masters at Moscow Centre, with all the confidence of the sustained double life dissolved in involuntary tearfulness, and Smiley, still caught in the interminable network of treachery, at last confronting his own faithless wife. Haydon, Le Carré notes, 'took it for granted that secret services were the only real measure of a nation's political health, the only real expression of its subconscious.' This, perhaps, is also a theme working itself out in *Tinker, Tailor*, through the isolation of the intelligence world and the melancholy of those banished from it, like Jim Prideaux (Ian Bannen), now serving out time as a prep school master. Self-satisfied, easily bamboozled, deeply divided, the Circus may in some fashion stand for our intellectual subconscious, linked to the prewar university where the Burgeses and Macleans were recruited (the elegant closing credits of each episode suggest this, though curiously Oxford rather than Cambridge) and to the postwar prep school where Roach, the sorry little rich boy, spies for his friend Prideaux. Also, as Le Carré himself has engagingly put it, there is in Smiley's quest the regrets of 'a man searching for his own lost innocence among the sins of his companions.'

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy

Public reaction to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (BBC-TV) would seem to have followed an entertaining if no doubt predictable course. At the outset, tetchy reviewers were reporting distraught letters from their readers, set on watching Sir Alec but unable to make head or tail of what he was about. By the seventh and final episode, the consensus view (against some pockets of strong critical resistance) seemed to be that the series had been a great success and that much credit was due to everyone, not least to the viewers who had stuck it out with the plot. Richard Hoggart turned up on television to claim, with that condescension which seems a mark of the media seer, that the audience had demonstrated superior intelligence and that TV programmers should take note of the fact. But in spite of the publicity, and the fact that the ITV strike had knocked out half the opposition, *Tinker, Tailor* was too up-market a series to make the top ratings. In any case, I suspect that its success had less to do with audience intelligence than with the habit-forming powers of any series, a very clever score (by Geoffrey Burgen), and a mesmerising star performance.

Alec Guinness got to the bottom of George Smiley; that, in itself, was predictable. The problem for Arthur Hopcraft, as writer, and John Irvin, as director, was to get somewhere with Le Carré, by

Poto and Cabengo

Jean-Pierre Gorin's fascinating documentary *Poto and Cabengo* (The Other Cinema) examines the case of a pair of pre-school age identical twins, living in San Diego, California, who were alleged by press reports to have invented a private language—a remarkable feat, if it were so, as this 'invented language' constituted their entire linguistic performance.

From a strictly linguistic perspective, such a case, though unusual, presents relatively straightforward

problems. The way a child acquires language has been documented as the construction of an evolving series of linguistic models, which are continually being tested in use, refined and retested, until the child's linguistic competence corresponds with the dominant adult model. The circumstances in which children fail to acquire language are so extreme (such as near total lack of linguistic stimuli or severe mental subnormality) that various linguists have postulated the existence of an innate tendency towards language acquisition. Such circumstances being absent in this case, it is reasonable to assume that the children have acquired, rather than invented, language and that the reasons for its inaccessibility to adults are probably phonological, abnormalities in the formation of individual speech sounds. (This is eventually shown to be the case; the twins' language is basically English, with considerable phonological variation.)

Gorin does imply an acceptance of these facts in stressing, as the central problem of the film, the question that first appears as a title, 'What are they saying?' But he is concerned with much more than a problem in applied linguistics; 'What are they saying?', the question that was neither asked nor answered in the newspaper reports, comes to stand for all the wider issues left unexamined by the media and the specialists (speech therapists and linguists) dealing with the case. The nature of these issues is hinted at in the very first shot, a frame from a 'Katzenjammer Kids' strip. The question really acquires force with the presentation of a videotape of the children playing and chattering. What they are saying is quite unintelligible, but it is clear that they are communicating with one another. Gorin's superimposition of a series of question marks moving across the screen aptly sums up one's reaction to this. Such devices are used throughout the film: one of the strengths of *Poto and Cabengo* is the sureness with which Gorin structures his material in a manner that is not merely descriptive but analytical—a refreshing change from conventional documentary practice.



'Poto and Cabengo'

The focus widens with Gorin's introduction of himself as both subject and narrator, as he records his visits to the family and the development of his relationship with the twins and their parents and grandmother. The twins, Gracie and Ginny ('Poto' and 'Cabengo' are their nicknames for each other), come from a lower-middle class family. Their father, American by birth, had been on welfare until the publicity surrounding the children encouraged him to get a job as a salesman. Their mother was German, and had learned English (which she still speaks with a pronounced German accent) while working at the US base where she met her husband. Their grandmother, whose voice Gorin states was the one they heard most, 'had only mastered four or five words of English'. In a sequence of the family having dinner, Gorin highlights the odd mixture of German and English by superimposing a transcription of the dialogue.

The children's speech therapist refers to their having been exposed to two linguistic models, both 'defective'. This is an over-simplistic analysis, but the adjective is revealing. If the father's English is one of the models referred to, this verdict is a social

judgment masquerading as a linguistic one. What the therapist does not comment on is that, so far as one can tell from the film, the twins come from a family where people talk around them, but not to them. The non-linguistic aspects of this deprivation are reflected in a sequence where Gorin takes the children out for the day: to the zoo, to a library, to his own house, where they prepare a meal (and the twins' grandmother starts fussily weeding Gorin's garden). The scenes convey strongly the twins' sense of excitement at these new experiences, and their impatience at Gorin's slowness, weighed down by his film equipment. 'They saw me as a route to the outside world,' he comments, and they couldn't care less about his interest in their past. Part of the film's fascination is that in many ways it is about discovery: the twins' discovery of language and of new experience; Gorin's discovery of them.

Summing up, Gorin returns to the Katzenjammer Kids and comments that there was 'a ring of Ellis Island to their story'. The twins' linguistic peculiarity was, in a sense, a symptom of the failure of the American Dream for their family. 'What are they saying?' is finally answered in a section of the film titled (with, I suspect, a touch of irony) 'The Verdict of Science'. The twins' speech is presented, as earlier, in voice-over, but with phonetic transcription and an English translation. With these aids, one is suddenly able to follow what they are saying—the revealing implication being that their speech was always potentially comprehensible to anyone who bothered to make the effort to understand it.

The film ends on a depressing note. Gorin returns to the family six months later to show them living in a more expensive house. The twins have been sent to separate schools, and the media have failed to follow up 'the story that they had distorted in the first place'. Three months later, Gorin reports, the family were unable to meet their rent, the twins' father having sold only one house since his venture into salesmanship.

ALLAN T. SUTHERLAND

BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN FORD

By Andrew Sinclair

GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN, £7.50

For all that we supposedly live in one of the great ages of biography, amidst the distinguished work currently being written about the cinema, biographies of the first rank are most notably lacking. As artist, exemplary American, legendary folk hero, John Ford is an ideal and worthwhile subject; and as an authority on American history, a biographer, novelist, film-maker and a publisher of screenplays, Andrew Sinclair would seem eminently qualified to write the definitive biography. In the event, he has written a slight, affectionate, readable life that can be considered little more than an interim work.

The story he tells is a familiar one—the Irish-American boyhood in Maine at the turn of the century, the

early start in Hollywood as an assistant to his enigmatic brother Francis (John's senior by thirteen years and in 1914 an established actor-director), the apprenticeship in the free-wheeling infant industry, the rise to fame with *The Iron Horse*, the easy transition to sound, a career spent near the top of his profession for forty years, with added kudos from a war record that eventually brought him the reserve rank of admiral, a growing sadness in the life and work that marked a tragic perception of the betrayal contained in the promise of the American Dream.

Sinclair re-creates that Way Down East childhood with the skill of the imaginative writer and locates there, in addition to the Catholicism, the Irishness and the love of family, Ford's attachment to the sea and the US Navy whose fleet displays and first naval flying corps squadrons he saw

in Portland harbour as a teenager. He demonstrates that Ford's family was both more prosperous than he ever let on (his immigrant father was a successful saloon-keeper and businessman with real political influence), yet less deeply rooted in America than he claimed. Numerous relatives did not fight on both sides during the Civil War.

Thereafter, apart from occasional oddments (such as a description of the bitter professional and personal disappointments of the early 50s), the book throws fresh light on two areas only. One is that from the early 1920s Ford was an undercover agent for American naval intelligence, carrying out clandestine operations around the world. The other, related to this, concerns Ford's World War II activities, when he surfaced again in uniform to take command of the Field Photographic Branch of the OSS (precursor of the post-war CIA) and played a more extensive role than has previously been documented. Films, most notably *The Battle of Midway*, and the regular promotions, are indisputable evidence; and to this Sinclair adds the detailed citations from senior naval staff and testimony from wartime colleagues.

The pre-war intelligence work is less well documented and remains as vague as Ford's association with the IRA that ran parallel to it. Ford's devoted wife Mary, the Protestant from a leading Southern family he

married in 1920, recalls him going off to Ireland in 1921. But was this to fight the British, to lend comfort to compatriots, or to work for the US secret service? Maybe it was just a holiday wrapped in conspiratorial fantasy. Certainly from an early age Ford was cloaking himself in a myth so elaborate that he himself became incapable of distinguishing the warp of truth from the woof of fiction. Mary Ford, who gave Sinclair extensive help, tells him stories of her counter-intelligence activities in the 30s that are the stuff of B-movies or the plot of the espionage fiction of that other romantic supporter of Irish causes, Erskine Childers.

'This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend,' the old newspaper editor tells the young reporter in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*; but by the time he says that, Ford has shown us the complex, shabby facts. Though he fashionably attaches immense importance to this film, Sinclair never really manages to disentangle fact and legend. Perhaps he should have devoted more time to the neglected *When Willie Comes Marching Home* (1949), which he erroneously dismisses as a remake of *Hail the Conquering Hero* when it in fact turns Sturges' picture on its head. Willie, a World War II airman, spends most of the war hanging around his home town as an instructor, thus winning the contempt of his fellow citizens.

Suddenly he's whisked off to France for four days of hectic danger with the underground, an adventure so brief and secret that no one knows it has happened. In the course of the picture Ford lampoons Hollywood's war movies, makes jokes about conventional chauvinism, and presents as the real hero a man whose military career was so extraordinary, clandestine and private that no one can recognise it. I'm persuaded by evidence in Sinclair's book that this generally disregarded picture might have a deeper personal importance than Ford was prepared to admit.

Sinclair's views on the films are orthodox in both estimation and interpretation. He hasn't discovered any of the lost silent pictures and he hasn't dug up new material of the kind Kevin Brownlow unearthed in his chapter on *The Iron Horse* in *The War, the West and the Wilderness*. He is best where the movies are close to the main political currents of their time, on *Stagecoach*, for instance, which he sees as an allegory of the late New Deal period, and *The Grapes of Wrath*, which he calls 'radical in style but conservative in text'. He doesn't change one's mind about any films and it is not at all clear how recently he has seen them, or in some cases whether he has seen them at all.

He takes over, with acknowledgement, Peter Bogdanovich's filmography, with its various errors. *Gideon's Day* (1958), for example, is said not to have been released in colour. It was in Britain, though Sinclair doesn't appear to have spoken to any of Ford's local collaborators about the film. Then he lists a 1958 picture called *So Alone* and in his text observes: 'Ford showed how much he felt at home in England by shooting for Free Cinema and the British Film Institute a short film about two street singers walking the Wapping Docks. It was called *So Alone* and its title seemed to mock Ford's increasing isolation in the cinema world.' Bogdanovich drops this item from the new edition of his *John Ford* for the simple reason that the film does not exist. It was, I'm told, a little hoax that got into the record.

The inaccuracies spread further, and it is clear that for all his command of national history, Sinclair does not have too firm a grasp of the progress of the film industry. Thus he has Zanuck at Fox in 1931 (four years early), Joseph Kennedy at RKO in 1934 (five years too late), and Harry Cohn still in charge at Columbia three years after his death. More importantly, he seems to regard the Wall Street crash as having coincided with the coming of sound, with the first by implication having slightly preceded the second. As Alexander Walker demonstrates in *The Shattered Silents*, the coming of sound significantly preceded the Crash; had it not done so, the cinema might well have taken a different course.

What of Sinclair's presentation of Ford's character? Of Ford's working methods and the film family he created, Sinclair tells us the familiar stories, but as a man he emerges from the book a shadowy figure. 'He yells real loud, he'd make a good

director,' Carl Laemmle is supposed to have said, and yet we never hear of him shouting much or telling anyone anything very positively. His most deliberate acts in the elaborate ritual of his working life were of a peculiarly vindictive nature, designed supposedly to test character by seeing how people stood up to public humiliation. Perhaps this was why he was surrounded by so many unpleasant and insensitive characters. Sinclair always looks to the explanation that will present Ford in the best light. Among other things he tries to clear him of the charge of anti-semitism, which he does partly through failing to collect much of the available evidence. He cannot of course avoid mentioning that Ford founded a yachting club that had the informal motto 'No Jews, no dues', or that he drove the only Jewish writers he ever worked with, Phoebe and Henry Ephron, off the set with anti-semitic jibes.

Yet at the end this is a touching portrait of Ford, and it is Sinclair's laudable aim to honour and memorialise a great man—which is admittedly a rather easier task than understanding him in the fullness of his and his work's complexity.

PHILIP FRENCH

THE MOVIE BRATS

By Michael Pye and Lynda Myles

FABER AND FABER, £5.25

AMERICAN FILM NOW

By James Monaco

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS (NEW YORK), £9.50

Television, it would seem, was never quite the dragon that chroniclers of Hollywood's decline have tended to depict: a villainous enchanter just happening along to lure audiences away wholesale, leaving the defenceless movie industry in ruins. Marshalling a convincing array of facts and figures, Michael Pye and Lynda Myles demonstrate that, immediately following the bumper year of 1946, cinema attendances began to show a marked slump; and that this trend was well under way not only before sales of TV sets had reached any significant level (in 1947, only one US home in 2,500 had a set), but even before the anti-trust actions (divorcing the studios from their cinema chains) began to add their bite to the economic difficulties of studios faced by large post-war pay settlements and by banks increasingly grudging of the money they had available for investment.

The persuasive new villain proposed by the authors of *The Movie Brats* is the suburban explosion which climaxed the steady growth away from urbanism interrupted earlier only by the Depression and the 1939-45 war; or to be more precise, 'the change of mind on a national scale' represented by the new suburbia. This change, as well as its relevance to Hollywood's predicament, is clearly defined by way of a succinct summary of Margaret Mead's sociological observations:

'She saw that Americans had traditionally seen leisure as something that must be earned, and

earned again. Leisure without effort was idle luxury, and immoral. In contrast, work was a moral good. . . . War smashed that. War workers seemed to make almost too much money. Soldiers suffered, not just on battlefields, but also from boredom overseas and too little time on leave. Families waited, aching for peace and privacy. They worked for their happiness, but the work did not produce joy. The old equation no longer worked. 'The generation which has married since the war has responded to these conditions,' Mead wrote, 'by shifting the balance from work and good works to the home. The home, in which one was once allowed a limited amount of recuperation and recreation in return for working hard, has now become the reason for existence which in turn justifies work at all.'

Hugging close to their suburban hearths, the new families devoted their leisure to crafts, do-it-yourself and sport rather than going out to the movies (or even watching TV); and their children grew up affluent, educated, and utterly alienated from the old dreams that the Hollywood factory was still desperately trying to stuff down their throats. Hence, *The Movie Brats* argues, not merely the success of American International Pictures, which set out to capture this new audience with cheap exploiters catering specifically to its needs and interests (drag-racing, beach parties, rock'n'roll, teenage monsters), but the remarkable roll of talent stemming directly or indirectly from AIP: Corman, Coppola, Hellman, Scorsese, Nicholson, Milius, etc. etc.

Whether one argues that AIP was lucky (or perceptive) in the new directors it chose to encourage, or that the directors learned something of value from AIP's 'exploitation' approach, the fact remains that these film-makers, plus friends and associates, have been responsible not only for some of the best work in recent years, but for some of the biggest box-office bonanzas: *Jaws*, *The Godfather*, *American Graffiti*, *Close Encounters*, *Star Wars*, *Taxi Driver*.

The Movie Brats concentrates on six film-makers—Coppola, Lucas, De Palma, Milius, Scorsese, Spielberg—who are subjected to critically acute and by no means hagiographic study. The common denominator extracted is that they are, for a variety of reasons, 'movie brats'. In that they 'know the past of cinema like scholars; they grew with it and through it', for example; in that they have an intuitive understanding of the social change that wrecked Hollywood, because it shaped them as they grew up; and above all in that, through their success, they have either attained, or are determinedly working towards, positions of power which will not only give them freedom to make the films they want to make, but will confirm them as the true children and heirs of the old Hollywood moguls.

One can challenge *The Movie Brats* on detail, worry about certain loose ends and red herrings, but it is all of a piece and argues its fascinating thesis through to the logical conclusion of its view of *Close Encounters* as a record of yet another

sociological change (brought about by the collapse of the ideology of liberalism as the affluent self-confidence of its sustaining suburban life-style gradually erodes). 'In disillusion, all that is left is the dream of the millennium. It took a suburban child, able to make films because of the industry troubles provoked by the failure of studios to recognise the new suburban ethic, to encapsulate the death of suburban ideals.'

In tracing sociological necessity as a concomitant to personal expression in film-making, Pye and Myles also provide a helpful rundown on the realities of finance and such teasing by-products as tax shelters. Covering much the same territory in the opening chapters of *American Film Now*, James Monaco offers a more extensive but rather less illuminating description of the ways, means and problems attendant nowadays upon getting a film off the ground. Less committed than Pye and Myles to the six directors celebrated in *The Movie Brats*, however, he does provide a useful corrective to their perhaps euphoric view of the future. Despite the enormous success of *Jaws* and *Close Encounters*, there can be little doubt that Spielberg's best film to date remains the smaller and humbler *Duel*. He may, like Coppola and Lucas, be consolidating a position of power, but can he ever get out again from under the tonnage of his vast blockbusters?

Monaco has grave doubts, and although he rates Coppola highly, tends to dismiss such whiz-kids as Spielberg and Lucas as being emptily preoccupied with adventure and suspense, fulminating in general against 'the movie of visceral action' because it tends to drive out other films. But then Monaco's predilections, set against those of Pye and Myles, suggest a return to the old content versus form dichotomy. As he explains, his preference is for a 'cinema of domestic or sexual politics' as instanced by Cassavetes, Altman, Coppola, Michael Ritchie and Paul Mazursky. Nothing wrong with that, except that Monaco's denial of content to more formally striking film-makers leads him to underrate or dismiss some of the best films of recent years. *Days of Heaven* ('here is a truly epic vision—not much in particular') and *The King of Marvin Gardens* ('the film deflates very quickly') are notable cases in point. But even *Klute*, which he admires chiefly for its feminist psychology, provokes him to a querulous remark on the 'curious fact that the film is named for the secondary character'. To see Jane Fonda's call-girl as the focal point of the film is to ignore its structural and formal implications that the real subject is also (perhaps even more so) detective Klute's slide from objective to subjective obsession with voyeurism.

American Film Now, in other words, is pretty middle-of-the-road. A sort of scrapbook of the 70s, it mingles extended discussion of pet film-makers with reminders of most of the major films made during the decade (often, pointlessly, no more than a line or two), busily catalogues trends and phenomena, includes a

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handful of filmographies and 'who's who' listings, and tiresomely provides charts consigning directors, actors and actresses to whimsical categories ('Stars... Comets... Futures... Underachievers... Safe Kooks... Losses... Elder States-women' etc.). A monument to painstaking fact-assembling, it probably has its uses as a memory-freshener.

TOM MILNE

PICTURES WILL TALK: The Life and Films of Joseph L. Mankiewicz

By Kenneth L. Geist

FREDERICK MULLER, £6.95

The author bestows only 'qualified gratitude' on Joseph L. Mankiewicz in the acknowledgments to this uneven, often irritating volume: scripts, eleven interviews and a letter of authorisation were provided, but access to correspondence, files and diaries wasn't. Indeed, Mankiewicz is presented throughout as a grudging, cantankerous victim of his determined biographer Kenneth L. Geist (writer of profiles for Warhol's *Inter/View* amongst much else). And the characterisation begins on page one, with Geist ludicrously recalling how the director had poured cold water on the project with 'smoke billowing from his ever-lit pipe filled with a mixture called Barking Dog' and 'a swatter poised to exterminate an elusive fly.'

One shudders to think how large and unwieldy the book would have been had Geist penetrated the Mankiewicz archives. As it is

Mankiewicz's past associates allowed him to cram four hundred pages (and abundant footnotes) with enough gossip column trivia to set the head reeling. This is the kind of biography that tells us of Joe's childhood fondness for a certain 'filthy old bathrobe'; the kind of film study that draws attention to Celeste Holm's odd obsession with washing her hair during the making of *All About Eve*, or the seven pounds of pork sausages, fetched from London by Cliff Robertson for the cast of *The Honey Pot* in Rome, which vanished from sight after being lodged in Mankiewicz's fridge. Then there are the constant love affairs—from the almost platonic (Margaret Sullavan) downwards; the arguments and rifts with producers and stars, variously recalled by the participants; the thrusts of Mankiewicz's rapier wit (an associate producer is defined as 'a mouse studying to become a rat').

Luckily the book tells us much more about Mankiewicz than his fondness for Barking Dog, bathrobes and sausages. It would be surprising if it didn't, for there is much to tell—about the early years spent under the shadow of his elder brother Herman, Hollywood's most profligate screenwriter/wit, about the rapid rise past Herman up the ladder to a producership at MGM, where Mayer tried grooming him as a successor boy wonder to Thalberg; about the final turn to direction in the 1940s and the cluster of Academy Awards, his uncertain fortunes as an independent producer in the 50s, the legendary fiasco of *Cleopatra*. And it is a career that seriously needs documentation

and evaluation, for since the release of his last film *Sleuth* in 1972 Mankiewicz has become one of Hollywood's more forgotten veterans.

The many assignments of the 30s receive brief treatment, but Geist does provide detailed consideration from *Dragonwyck* onwards, when Mankiewicz as writer-director was able to nurse his stylishly talkative, cynical characters all the way to the screen. Unfortunately Geist is simply too discursive for proper critical analysis, and the links he attempts between Mankiewicz's personal life and the films (chiefly the rivalry between young and old, present in works as disparate as *All About Eve* and *The Quiet American*, echoing his complex relationship with Herman) are too sketchily made to be of benefit. The book succeeds best when its author avoids being either film scholar or gossip columnist and settles for straight reporting. The *Cleopatra* chapter, in particular, provides a fascinating catalogue of calamities beggarly all description, with Mankiewicz heroically battling against overnight rewrites, extras wearing wigs back to front and a French cameraman who mistook his cry of 'Rex' (to Rex Harrison) for the signal to cut and thus undid a set-up involving flaming funeral pyres and a charge of six hundred riderless horses.

GEOFF BROWN

History of the British Film

SIR,—Edgar Anstey's review of Rachael Low's *opus* is some affirmation that a film critic can be worthy of inclusion in the ranks of English 'Men of Letters'. Many of your readers will recall the detachment, the generosity and the sheer fairness of judgment that Anstey brought to 'The Critics' on BBC wireless countless Sunday mornings past.

John Grierson acknowledged him to be 'the finest obituary writer after me'. He would be astonished by the fresh and virtuoso revelation in Anstey's critical imagination, which is re-appraising the continuity of some of the major issues of our time, and shaping them anew into a subtle account of how he and his contemporaries responded to them.

It was, however, forgetful of him to suggest that Grierson welcomed 'religious film-makers'. Grierson was terrified of them, and resisted, as best he could, any attempt to bring the arcane mysteries of religion to the screen, believing the Word to be their proper sphere.

Your faithfully,
MARGARET ANN ELTON
Clevedon, Somerset.

SIR,—When my old friend and colleague Edgar Anstey calls Rachael Low's monumental new volumes on the *History of the British Film* a 'crazy enterprise' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1979) and in the same sentence talks of her books as 'an astonishing life's work', I can only assume that he uses the word 'crazy' in the sense that the much-lamented S. J. Perelman used it in *Crazy Like a Fox* (Heinemann, 1945).

In his list of Soho pubs at which we documentarists sank our mild-and-bitters, he omits the *Britannia* and the *George*, but they were before Edgar joined the party. He finds the author 'a bit patronising to almost everyone'; I do not so find. On the contrary, her detached objectivity in assessing the talents and personalities of the documentarists of the 30s is admirably balanced when you consider she was not around in those years. Anstey writes of her 'inevitable factual inaccuracies' but with one exception (re *The Private Life of the Gannets*), he fails to list them for the use of future students, as well as for Miss Low herself. By the way, John Taylor was right about Guido (or Guino) Baldi (though Anstey doubts it); he was a gifted early 'special effects' man, an Italian, who worked at BIP, Elstree, when I was there in short trousers, but it is odd that he contributed to Grierson's puppet films which were made at Wembley Studios the same year. But Italians, like Hungarians, are sometimes

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Increases in the cost of paper, printing and postage over the past two years have now made an increase in the price of SIGHT AND SOUND unavoidable. From 1st April 1980, the yearly subscription rate will be £4.20. Single copies will cost 85p from bookshops and newsagents and £1.15 by post from British Film Institute Publications, 81 Dean Street, London W1V 6AA.



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slippery, as Miss Low will find when she writes her last volume, which will cope with the British fiction feature film industry of the same period—1929-39—in her invaluable record.

Anstey jokingly gives me a sentence: 'She gives you one film you never made, all you're missing is the odd credit here and there.' Explanation, please?

Yours faithfully,
Wallingford, Oxon. PAUL ROTH

SIR,—In his recent review of my books *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* and *Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930s*, Edgar Anstey's throwaway reference to Paul Rotha's remark ('She gives you one film you never made, all you're missing is the odd

credit here and there') mystifies me. If he agrees with it, why not name the films and get the record straight?

In the interests of accuracy, I would like to explain why I think my attribution of his films is correct. In a letter dated October 30th 1967 to Paul Rotha, to whom I am greatly indebted for letting me see it, Edgar Anstey lists his own films of this period as follows: *Uncharted Waters*, *Eskimo Village*, *Industrial Britain*, *Granton Trawler*, *6.30 Collection*, *Airport*, *Housing Problems* and *Enough to Eat*.

My book mentions all these and also three others which he may have forgotten, *Dinner Hour*, *On the Way to Work* and *B.B.C.—Droitwich*. *Dinner Hour* and *On the Way to Work* were shown at the Film Society in January 1936 and January 1937

respectively, Anstey being credited as director in the relevant Film Society programmes. As for *B.B.C.—Droitwich*, according to Harry Watt's autobiography Anstey did the preliminary work for this. Indeed, in a taped interview in the book by Elizabeth Sussex, Anstey says 'We did a film about the making of the radio station in Droitwich...' and goes on to give a vivid account of how he clambered up a 450 foot mast whilst making it.

If Mr Anstey realised that the comment was unjustified, it seems a pity that he should have confused future students of the documentary movement by passing it on.

As for *The Private Life of the Gannets*, Grierson was not mentioned in reviews of it in *Cinema Quarterly*, *SIGHT AND SOUND* or *Monthly Film Bulletin* at the time, nor did his name appear on the film itself, and it seemed to me more in keeping with his style to have suggested the slow motion sequences than to have photographed them, especially as the film was being shot by a first-class cameraman, Osmond Borrodaile. However, Mr Anstey is so emphatic that perhaps I must leave that open.

Yours faithfully,
Norton, Worcester RACHAEL LOW

location at Beckton. The credits not listed were for the direction of *The Norfolk Bittern* and for the camerawork on *Uncharted Waters* and *Eskimo Village*. As I tried to say, none of this much matters, but I am a little more bothered by the omission throughout of the question mark from the title of *Enough to Eat*?

May I repeat that the importance of these two remarkable books does not depend on such details but on Rachael Low's achievement in bringing alive again a period in the development of popular communication which was to transform our sense of the world we inhabit?—

EDGAR ANSTEY

Film Policy for the 80s

SIR,—I suspect that you and I owe an explanation to readers of my article *Film Policy for the 80s: industry or culture?* who were puzzled by the lack of any reference in the text of the article to the Table II (Eady Levy 1977/78) which was printed on page 223 (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Autumn 1979). In fact, Table II came from an earlier version of the article in which I had attempted to estimate how much money the Government would be prepared to advance to the NFFC from the Eady Levy. In the event, it became necessary to rewrite that part of the article after the proofs had been checked in order to take account of John Nott's written reply to the House of Commons on 26 July 1979, thus rendering my original estimates in Table II unnecessary.

Unfortunately for the NFFC, my original estimate of £2.1 millions was somewhat over-optimistic. The figure envisaged by the Secretary of State fell to between £1 million and £1.5 millions.

Yours faithfully,
VINCENT PORTER
London, N.W.3.

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I am always interested in purchasing all out-of-print cinema books, etc.

Oh dear! I should have known that if I conjured up the spirit of documentary's first historian and wrote his lines for him Paul would be bound to descend on me—authentic pen in hand—and demand satisfaction.

The film that Rachael Low lists as directed by me but which in fact wasn't, is not *BBC—Droitwich*, as she seems to assume, but *How Gas is Made*. I believe the latter was directed by Frank Sainsbury—at any rate he was in charge on the one occasion I remember visiting the

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-EMI-WARNER for *Apocalypse Now*, *Inside Daisy Clover*.

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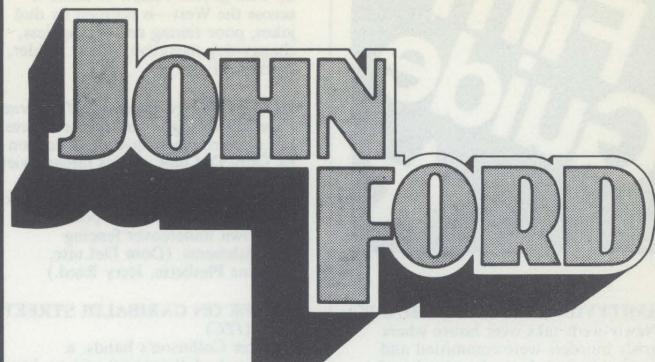
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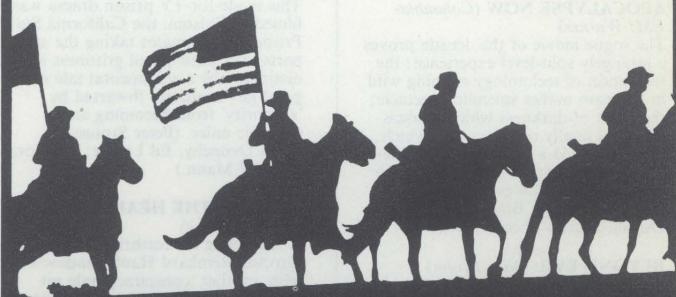
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Film Guide

***AMITYVILLE HORROR, THE (ITC)**
Newly-weds take over house where grisly murders were committed and inevitably find themselves lumbered with more than the mortgage payments in this straightforward but enjoyably confident spine-chiller. Punchy direction from Stuart Rosenberg; nice playing, especially by Rod Steiger as an increasingly turbulent priest. (James Brolin, Margo Kidder.)

****APOCALYPSE NOW (Columbia-EMI-Warner)**
The rogue movie of the decade proves a strangely split-level experience: the recreation of technology running wild in Vietnam makes splendid spectacle; the heart of darkness which Francis Coppola finally reaches—and which has swallowed a legendary investment of time and money—proves a mister mystical state than ever imagined by Conrad. (Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall, Martin Sheen.) *Reviewed*.

BEYOND EVIL (New Realm)
Liliana Cavani's vision of the scandalous ménage of the philosopher Nietzsche, writer Paul Réé and the provocative Lou Salomé is both a superficially outrageous one—images of hetero and homosexual Götterdämmerung to rival Visconti—and a rather stilted costume drama, frozen by its own self-importance. (Erland Josephson, Dominique Sanda, Robert Powell.)

***BREAD AND CHOCOLATE (CIC)**
Comedy about an Italian waiter (Nino Manfredi, excellent) forced to try to earn a living abroad. Quite amusing until it succumbs to pretentiousness and comes out in spots of significance about immigrant workers. (Anna Karina; director, Franco Brusati.)

BREAKING AWAY (Fox)
After the assured formulary control of *The Deep*, Peter Yates takes a curiously unfocused look at the circumscribed lives of four working-class teenagers from Bloomington, Indiana. A sludgy comedy about the search for identity, centred on the novel high-speed action of a bicycle race. (Dennis Christopher, Dennis Quaid, Jackie Earle Haley.)

****DYNAMITE WOMEN (New World)**
Amazingly inventive, very funny feminist reworking of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Unambitious, but rich in good-humoured entertainment as outlaw buddies Claudia Jennings and Jocelyn Jones rob banks, seduce men, and do what a woman's gotta do. (John Crawford; director, Michael Pressman.)

****ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ (CIC)**
With the exception of one routine suspense gag, Don Siegel's latest prison movie includes little that one might expect in the way of penal exploitation/protest. Instead it concentrates on the minutiae of a real-life break-out from Alcatraz, and brilliantly treads a knife edge between a sleek genre mechanism and a distilled meditation on the same. (Clint Eastwood, Patrick McGoohan, Paul Benjamin.) *To be reviewed next issue*.

FRISCO KID, THE (Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Western comedy which conclusively proves—as if it were needed after *The Choirboys*—that Robert Aldrich's

talents don't lie in that direction. An unpromising idea—Polish rabbi teams up with goyish outlaw to make it across the West—is scuttled by bad jokes, poor timing and a shapeless, shaggy-dog narrative. (Gene Wilder, Harrison Ford.)

***HOT STUFF (Columbia-EMI-Warner)**
Excellent dialogue and performances, but disastrously over-eager direction by Dom DeLuise, in this farcical view of a factual development: the US government's attempt to catch crooks in the act by having the police run their own undercover fencing establishments. (Dom DeLuise, Suzanne Pleshette, Jerry Reed.)

HOUSE ON GARIBALDI STREET, THE (ITC)
In Peter Collinson's hands, a thuddingly dull account of how Israeli agents tracked Eichmann and smuggled him out of Argentina. The hectoring script plainly doesn't believe that its audience will have heard of Eichmann, concentration camps or even the Second World War. (Topol, Janet Suzman, Martin Balsam.)

JERICHO MILE, THE (ITC)
This made-for-TV prison drama was filmed at Folsom, the California State Prison, with inmates taking the smaller parts. The anticipated grittiness is dissipated by a sentimental tale of a good-guy murderer thwarted by 'authority' from becoming an Olympic miler. (Peter Strauss, Brian Dennehy, Ed Lauter; director, Michael Mann.)

***KNIFE IN THE HEAD (Contemporary)**
Abandoning his forthright style, director Reinhard Hauff shadow-boxes with another 'conspiracy' tale set in a strait-jacketed West Germany. Bruno Ganz, a geneticist deliberately/accidentally shot by the police, harrowingly portrays a man reduced to a near-vegetable state pulling himself back to life. (Angela Winkler.)

****LOVE ON THE RUN (Gala)**
Reputedly François Truffaut's final statement in the matter of Antoine Doinel, this makes for a fairly lively re-run of the whole series (flashbacks and criss-crossing lives galore), but is less convincing when it tries to come to conclusions or suggest that Antoine might finally have found maturity. (Jean-Pierre Léaud, Marie-France Pisier, Claude Jade.) *Reviewed*.

***LUNA, LA (Fox)**
Bertolucci's powerful blend of myth and melodrama, charting the Freudian peregrinations of an American opera singer on tour in Italy with her drug-troubled son. The journey leads into too many cross-cultural cul-de-sacs, though there are some colourful turnings on the way through the labyrinth. (Jill Clayburgh, Matthew Barry, Tomas Milian.) *Reviewed*.

MAD MAX (Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Exploitation farce from Down Under which takes a hard-hat view of some far-fetched shenanigans involving dedicated cop and fiendish bikers. Good stunt work, but otherwise nothing to make New World look to its laurels. (Mel Gibson, Jeanne Samuel; director, George Miller.)

****MARTIN (Miracle)**
George A. Romero's raw, nerve-jangling attempt to talk about the modern sex-and-violence malaise with vampire movies as a reference point. Falls apart at the end, but the locations in suburban Pittsburgh remain weirdly unsettling. (John Amplas, Lincoln Maazel.)

METEOR (Columbia-EMI-Warner)
Clumping space disaster picture: Sean Connery, an MIT professor, is recalled to NASA's subterranean Manhattan HQ to mastermind the destruction of large meteor headed for Earth. Sundry rocky fragments wreak premature havoc; but with genial Russian aid (Brian Keith), all is ultimately, predictably well. Dud hardware; variable effects. (Natalie Wood, Karl Malden; director, Ronald Neame.)

**MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN (CIC)

A sustained, explosively funny lampoon of Biblical-Roman Empire epics: the Python team (forever changing costume) rip through the no-hope life of Brian Cohen, born in another Bethlehem manger, who has the ill luck to join a hidebound cell of distinctly 20th century revolutionaries. (The Monty Python team; director, Terry Jones.)

OUTSIDER, THE (CIC)

This blinkered, American-financed attempt at labelling the exclusively bloody 'realities' of Northern Ireland (1973)—guerrilla war is grubby, everyone's unprincipled—people a limited plot with posturing caricatures. Writer-director Tony Luraschi's attitude to the Troubles is as baffled as that of his callow hero, a would-be Irish-American 'freedom fighter'. (Craig Wasson, Sterling Hayden.)

PRISONER OF THE CANNIBAL GOD (Entertainment)

An essentially idiotic fantasy-thriller about a New Guinea jungle trek to rescue a white ethnologist lost in cannibal country. Directed by Sergio Martino with galloping, if sometimes distasteful zest, the film is sustained throughout by its workmanlike lack of pretensions. (Ursula Andress, Stacy Keach.)

**RADIO ON (BFI)

The down-at-mouth hero of this accomplished first feature, a road movie 'mystery' directed by the former *Time Out* critic Christopher Petit, ruminates on chance and displacement, and on the lives of the children (now in their early thirties) of 'Fritz Lang and Werner von Braun'. (David Beames, Lisa Kreuzer.) *Reviewed*.

*RICH KIDS (United Artists)

Uncomfortable mixture of cuteness and cynicism as two 12-year-olds observe, comment upon, and suffer from, parental divorces. A surprisingly conventional offering from Altman's Lion's Gate Films. (Trini Alvarado, Jeremy Levy, Kathryn Walker; director, Robert M. Young.)

ROCKY II (United Artists)

Seamlessly reconstituted from the contents (rather than the left-overs) of *Rocky*, these further adventures of the Philadelphian simpleton with the iron-clad physique lack the genuinely naive charm of the original, and bank instead on the doubtful appeal of reheated razzmatazz. (Sylvester Stallone, Talia Shire, Burgess Meredith, Burt Young; director, Sylvester Stallone.)

*ROSE, THE (Fox)

A surprisingly canny and enjoyable tale of the decline and fall of a rock 'n' roll star, gradually sliding from a celebration of Bette Midler's inimitable stage presence to lament for such as Janis Joplin. Story and characterisation effectively reduced to a patchwork round the concert footage; late 60s background as slyly incorporated. (Alan Bates, Frederic Forrest; director, Mark Rydell.)

*SCUM (GTO)

Where the banned BBC-TV version of *Scum* sailed close to the wind with its approach to Borstal abuses, this film reworking loses much of its credibility by stereotyping the characters and lingering far too lovingly over physical damage. Roy Minton's script, however, retains its outrage and the key central dialogue between warder and inmate its socio-dramatic power. (Ray Winstone, Mick Ford, Julian Firth; director, Alan Clarke.)

SEDUCTION OF JOE TYNAN, THE (CIC)

A rather pointless political fable, in which a young, liberal senator is caught between an old friendship and a new cause (and his affair with a with-it woman attorney). Political and moral issues wither away, and Alan Alda, writer and star, indulges himself in both capacities. (Barbara Harris,

Meryl Streep, Rip Torn; director, Jerry Schatzberg.)

STEEL (Columbia-EMI-Warner)

High-rise construction workers, the fairly novel heroes of this crisply-made action movie by Cormac student Steve Carver, are rapidly compromised by predictable plotting and hackneyed characterisation. The script is distinguished by particularly offensive brands of sexism and anti-unionism. (Lee Majors, Jennifer O'Neill, Art Carney.)

**"10" (Columbia-EMI-Warner)

A comedy of contemporary California manners, directed by Blake Edwards with a disconcerting mixture of obviousness and subtlety. The material, about male menopause and middle-aged fantasy, seems not altogether digested, but Edwards brings off some splendid comic set-pieces and cameos. (Julie Andrews, Dudley Moore, Robert Webber.)

*THIS SWEET SICKNESS (Artificial Eye)

Claude Miller's second feature, radically adapted from Patricia Highsmith's thriller, digs among the roots of human passion: Gérard Depardieu plays the psychopathic but not ultimately despicable killer. Clipped assurance and the influence of Truffaut mark the direction. (Miou-Miou, Dominique Laffin, Claude Piéplu.)

*TIME AFTER TIME (Columbia-EMI-Warner)

Jack the Ripper (David Warner) escapes to contemporary San Francisco in the Time Machine, hotly pursued by an appalled H. G. Wells (Malcolm McDowell). Some pleasing conceits, although the message about violence is rather rammed home by Nicholas Meyer, whose script is better than his direction. (Mary Steenburgen.)

*THOSE WONDERFUL MOVIE CRANKS (Contemporary)

Jiri Menzel's slight but engaging encounter with the early years of Czech cinema, as a travelling showman tries to marry art and vaudeville to realise his dream of a permanent picture palace. Matches style to subject in its affectionate celebration of the pioneering spirit. (Rudolf Hrusinsky, Jiri Menzel, Blazena Holisova.)

**WISE BLOOD (Artificial Eye)

John Huston's version of Flannery O'Connor's novel about an atheistic apostle in the Bible Belt is wry, compassionate and unfailingly energetic. If not quite the equal of *Fat City*, its flair for narrative and atmosphere unmistakably betrays the touch of a master. (Brad Dourif, Ned Beatty, Harry Dean Stanton.) *Reviewed*.

*YANKS (United Artists)

Over-studious recreation of the spirit of wartime Britain, via three Anglo-American love affairs: John Schlesinger dovetails the pieces with old-fashioned craftsmanship, but the enterprise lacks much sense of urgency or even necessity. (Richard Gere, Lisa Eichhorn, William Devane, Vanessa Redgrave.) *Reviewed*.

ZOMBIES (Target)

This jokey sequel to *Night of the Living Dead* (1969)—the clockwork zombies are now well on the way to overrunning the United States—trowels on the increasingly unconvincing gore. George A. Romero attempts a statement about consumer values, but cuts out, after two long hours, with a happy ending. (David Emge, Ken Forre, Scott Reiniger, Gaylen Ross.)

ZULU DAWN (Tedderryck)

Cy Endfield, who made the 1963 *Zulu*, returns as writer to the same territory (another engagement between Zulus and British army on the same day) to little effect. Despite the title, the film largely ignores the Zulus for the usual spectacle—with an occasional nod to anti-imperialism. (Burt Lancaster, Peter O'Toole, Simon Ward; director, Douglas Hickox.)

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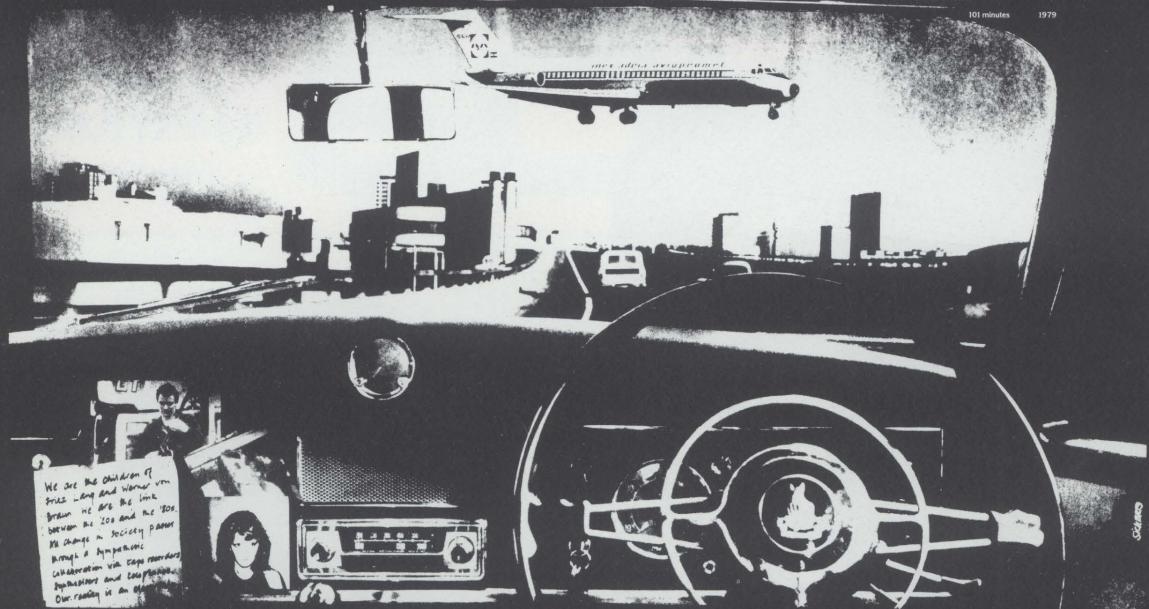
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DAVID BEAMES
Lisa Kreuzer
Sandy Ratcliff

ANDREW BYATT
SUE JONES-DAVIES
STING

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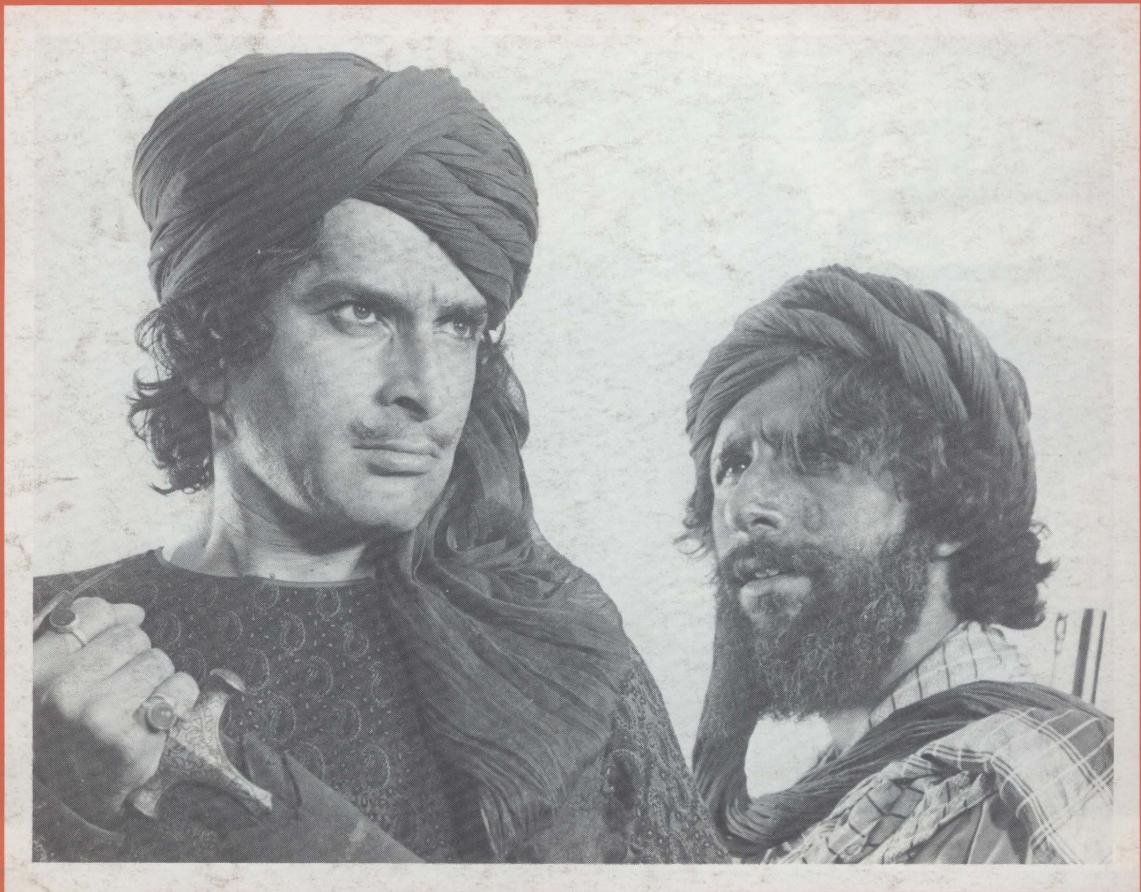
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